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KPC plans \$500bn oil spend by 2040

Capacity to surge

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31, (RTRS): Kuwait Petroleum Corporation expects to spend over \$500 billion as it boosts its crude oil production capacity to 4.75 million barrels per day in 2040, the national oil firm said on Wednesday, outlining ambitious growth plans for the next two decades.

"KPC is expected to spend \$114 billion in capex over the next five years and an additional \$394 billion beyond that to 2040," Chief Executive Nizar Al-Adsani told an oil industry conference.

Kuwait's current oil production capacity is around 3.15 million bpd. It revealed the plan to lift

capacity to 4.75 million bpd early last year.

The figure would exceed the current output of Iraq and Iran, OPEC's second and third biggest oil nations, whose production was 4.4 million and 3.8 million bpd respectively in December.

Iraq and Iran plan to raise output steeply in the coming years to compete with OPEC leader Saudi Arabia, which produces around 10 million bpd and has capacity of over 12 million bpd.

However, Iraq and Iran are running far behind their targets to expand output because of infrastructure constraints, red tape and in the case of Iran, the threat of Western sanctions.

The move by Kuwait to expand capacity signals a willingness among OPEC producers to fight for market share in the long term as global oil demand rises and as the organisation faces competition from Russia and two

Continued on Page 8

Mattis praises US-Qatar defence ties

WASHINGTON, Jan 31, (Agencies): Secretary of Defense James Mattis praised the US defense partnership with Qatar, calling it "a longtime friend in the region," during bilateral talks on Tuesday with senior Qatari officials.

Mattis praised his counterpart, Qatar Defense Minister Khaled Al-Atiyah, and the senior members of the delegation for Qatar's "strong" military partnership at the inaugural US-Qatar Strategic Dialogue meeting hosted by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.

"Even in the midst of its own current challenges, Qatar and the US maintain excellent military-to-military relations, hosting Al-Udeid Air Base, home to our Combined Air Operations Center, the US Air Force Central Command Forward Headquarters, and US Central Command's Forward Headquarters, providing critical counterterrorism support to the Defeat the Islamic State, Defeat DAESH coalition and President Trump's South Asia strategy," Mattis said.

Mattis expressed gratitude to Qatar's "longstanding support of America's present and continuing commitment to regional security," highlighting that Qatar Air Force completed its first two C-17 round trip flights from Afghanistan last week to support NATO's counter terrorism campaign.

The Secretary of Defense urged for a solution to the ongoing Gulf dispute, saying "It is critical that the GCC recovers its cohesion as the proud Gulf nations return to mutual support through a peaceful resolution that provides for enhanced regional stability and prosperity," he noted.

"A united Gulf Cooperation Council bolsters our effectiveness on many fronts, particularly on counterterrorism, defeating ISIS DAESH, and countering the spread of Iran's malign influence," said Mattis.

During the meeting, Defense Minister Al-Atiyah affirmed the "special relations" between the two nations as demonstrated by military-to-military partnership, highlighting Qatar's recent purchase of F-15 fighter jets from the US.

"The recent purchase of the F-15s fighter jets signals a new era of cooperation," Al-Atiyah said. "This strategic bond will assure our readiness to protect our own border and aid our allies further in our collective fight toward peace and stability." He also announced a cooperative military initiative "to ensure the safety of the forces serving in Al-Udeid and facilitate future capacity building by alleviating the classification of Al-Udeid to permanent US military base." The initiative will include the exchange of military personnel and the expansion of Al-Udeid

Continued on Page 4



Amiri Diwan photo

Amir attends luncheon banquet at Azayez Farm

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attended a luncheon banquet held at Sheikh Ali Al-Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's Azayez Farm at Abdali area. The banquet was attended by His Highness Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Sheikh Faisal Al-Soud Al-Mohammad, Sheikh Nasser Al-

Mohammad Al-Ahman, Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and other Al-Sabah family members. (KUNA)

MPs renew confidence in Hind Al-Sabeeh

By Abubakar A. Ibrahim

Arab Times Staff



Photo by Rizk Tawfiq
Hind Al-Sabeeh waving to supporters after Parliament renewed confidence in her.

South Yemen clashes abate

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31, (Agencies): The State of Kuwait rejects assaults on Yemen's constitutional institutions by illegitimate forces in the brotherly nation, the Deputy Foreign Minister has announced.

Khaled Al-Jarallah, in a statement to KUNA on Wednesday stated, "The bloody conflict in Yemen, namely the killing and relocation and deteriorating humanitarian conditions suffered by the Yemeni people throughout the past years had prompted the State of Kuwait to partake in political efforts hosting the warring parties for three months of consultations to try and reach a political solution according to the Gulf Initiative and decision issued by the international legitimacy namely resolution 2216."

"The State of Kuwait which has not disregarded the humanitarian situation in Yemen has committed itself to offer humanitarian and relief aid estimated at \$100 million (to be

THE radical statement or decision issued by the 'erratic' President of the Republic of Philippines Rodrigo Duterte, which had a sharp tone as expressed in Al-Qabas daily,

saying: "We do not want a dispute with Kuwait, we respect our relations, but it has something to do with sexual abuse which our women are facing."

After such a statement, rumors spread about barring Filipinas from traveling or returning to Kuwait. Then Duterte recently stated that he will ask every Filipina to leave Kuwait if they encounter any abuse in the future. He affirmed that Kuwait will suffer if such a decision is taken.

Other Voices

Kuwaitis without Filipinas!!

By Ali Ahmed Al-Baghi
Former Minister of Oil



We appreciate the circumstances which put us in this ordeal. If it happens to us, it will have a great impact on our lives which we have been building and enjoying due to this group of hygienic, educated, sincere and serious female workers who belong to the people of Philippines.

I remember in the 1960s when we were

Continued on Page 8

Email: ali-albaghi@hotmail.com

Fight until DAESH defeated – Trump

WASHINGTON, Jan 31, (Agencies): US President Donald Trump will warn that much more work remains in the war against the Islamic State group when he delivered his State of the Union address on Tuesday.

In his speech, Trump declared that a US-led coalition has "liberated almost 100 percent of the territory once held by these killers in Iraq and Syria."

"But there is much more work to be done," he will add, a key argument that his administration has deployed to justify the continued presence of US troops in the field.

"We will continue our fight until ISIS is defeated," he vowed, drawing comparison with what he sees as his predecessor Barack Obama's mistake in withdrawing from Iraq in 2011.

US troops had been in Iraq since 2003, when then-president George W. Bush sent them

Continued on Page 4

CLASSIFIEDS

are you looking for: job villa shop etc.



Nizar Al-Adsani, Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), gives a speech during the 2018 edition of the Petroleum Economist Energy Strategy Forum, in Kuwait City on Jan 31. (AFP)

Newswatch

KUWAIT CITY: The Ministry of Interior is preparing a database who visitors to the country who carry an electronic visa as part of the security measures adopted by the country to protect Kuwait's security, reports Al-Rai daily.

According to the security sources all border ports automatically take the fingerprints of the visitors, save them in the database and match them with the automated fingerprints of those who are wanted by law and stored in the Interior Ministry's computer network.

This move will prevent persons wanted by law from entering the country even if they arrive at the airport under fictitious names.

It is said the Criminal Evidence Department is currently working on electronic fingerprinting project for citizens and expatriates and people wanted by law and those banned from entering Kuwait.

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KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait witnessed on Wednesday a total lunar eclipse, known as the "Super Blue Blood Moon," a rare astronomical phenomenon which last occurred 150 years ago.

Sky watchers in Kuwait saw the unique occurrence partially at 5:25pm, and it lasted for 45 minutes. (KUNA)

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DUBAI: Bahrain's Shiite spiritual leader Sheikh Isa Qassim was returned to hospital on Wednesday to undergo a new round of surgery, a rights activist said.

"Sheikh Isa Qassim was admitted today to the Bahrain International Hospital to receive surgery for a hernia," Sheikh Maytham al-Salman from Bahrain Center for Human Rights told AFP.

He said authorities had delayed for two weeks before allowing the cleric to visit the hospital. (AFP)

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DUBAI: Bahrain's criminal court on Wednesday sentenced two Shiites to death and 19 others to life imprisonment in a ruling against a cell convicted of terror attacks.

It also sentenced 17 members of the cell to 15 years in jail, nine others to 10 years, 11 to five years, and acquitted the last two defendants, Bahrain's BNA news agency reported. (AFP)

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DUBAI: A top court in the Arabian Gulf nation of Bahrain sentenced two people to death on Wednesday and issued lengthy prison sentences against nearly all 60 defendants on terrorism charges in a case that highlights the rivalry between Sunni Gulf states and Shiite-ruled Iran.

A statement citing a prosecutor and published on the state-run Bahrain News Agency said 19 people were sentenced to life in prison, two were acquitted and the rest were ordered to serve between 15 and five years in prison.

The prosecutor said 36 of the defendants were tried while in custody, suggesting the remaining 24 were tried in absentia. (AP)

□ □ □

AFRIN, Syria: Clashes raged between Turkish-backed forces and Kurdish militia in Syria's Afrin region on Wednesday, as wounded civilians fled intense Turkish air strikes.

Turkey and allied Syrian rebels have pressed on with Operation Olive Branch in the Kurdish-controlled Afrin enclave despite mounting international concern and

Continued on Page 8

US/KD 0.29955/65
Euro/KD 0.3722
Yen/KD 0.0027
British £/KD 0.4252
KSE +23.78 pts at closing Jan 31 See Page 29
DOW +152.17 pts at 21:40 Jan 31 See Page 30
Nasdaq +25.44 pts at 21:40 Jan 31
FTSE -54.43 pts at closing Jan 31
Nikkei -193.68 pts at closing Jan 31
Gold \$1,345.05 per oz (London)
NYMEX crude \$64.59 per barrel
Brent crude \$68.71 per barrel
3-month \$ LIBOR rate 1.77340%

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Deadline for receiving nomination is 30th June

KFAS invites nominations for 2018 Kuwait Prize in four fields

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: The Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) is now accepting nominations from universities, scientific and research institutions and individuals – in Kuwait and abroad – for the 2018 cycle of the Kuwait Prize, awarded by KFAS in four fields, worth KD 40,000 each. The fields for the award for the current year are:

Fundamental Sciences, focusing this year on Biological Sciences, in-

cluding but not limited to cellular and molecular biology, developmental biology, heredity and epigenetics, microbiology and immunology.

The second field is Applied Sciences under the theme of Clean and Sustainable Energy Technologies, involving the topics of renewable sources, hydrogen, fuel cells, energy storage devices, biomass and lower carbon-footprints fossil fuel.

Third is Economics and Social Sci-

ences devoted this year to Economics covering the subjects of energy economics, microeconomics, macroeconomics, econometrics and development economics.

The fourth category is Arts and Literature, under which falls the Studies of Arabic Language and Literature, including but not limited to Arabic grammar and linguistics as well as classic and modern literary studies.

With the deadline for sending nomi-

nations set for June 30, 2018, KFAS emphasizes that nominees must be individuals of an Arab nationality, having achieved work that is innovative and significant in the fields. The work also must have been published during the past twenty years, whether in papers published or accepted for publication in refereed journals and books with an ISSN number.

The Foundation further indicates that it would accept nominations from

universities, academic and research institutions and scientific centers, as well as former laureates of the prize. Nominations submitted by political bodies are not acceptable.

Institutions and individuals wishing to send nominations are invited to fill in the nomination form and send it along with the submitted work online. The nomination form can be obtained from KFAS' official website (www.kfas.org). It should be noted that the

nomination form for Fundamental Sciences and Applied Sciences fields should be submitted in English language.

Submissions should be sent in PDF format only, either through sending a flash drive with the necessary documents to KFAS' address in Kuwait or through cloud storage sites, such as (Google Drive-Dropbox-OneDrive) with sending the link to KFAS' Prizes Office email: prize@kfas.org.kw.

Bushahri 'reiterates' her resolve to organise disbursement of allowance

'Some individuals taking advantage of this right'



Photos from the event

KSC organizes open day for people with special needs

Kuwait Scientific Club (KSC) recently organized the annual open day for people with special needs, old people and cancer patients at the Aviation Club Campsite in Khairan.

The event was held under the auspices of the club's board chairman Talal Jassem Al-Kharafi and Secretary General Ali Kazem Al-Jum'aah.

The club received a large num-

ber of handicaps and old people with their families, in addition to the representatives of some agencies, centers and volunteer groups that play special roles in supporting and assisting handicaps.

The event was held under the

auspices of the club's board chair-

man Talal Jassem Al-Kharafi and

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LOCAL

Legal Eagle

Licensing the rights to a third party's Intellectual Property

By Najmah Mateese Brown, Esq.

This past Tuesday, Jan 30, 2018, I had the pleasure of attending the D1 MEET UP, a monthly networking event for the Kuwaiti creative community, hosted by Dina Al-Mallak and Jassim Burhami of CEE Network, and Masscreation Productions. This month's meet up featured Raed Al-Hout, US Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) Intellectual Property (IP) Specialist for MENA, who is based out of the US Embassy of Kuwait. Al-Hout



discussed Intellectual Property Rights in Kuwait in comparison with the US, and international treaties that govern IP rights.

Having over fifteen years of experience in the media industry back in the US, both as a creative and attorney, the MEET

UP was a very eye-opening experience to what information the creative community lacks and desires in connection with Intellectual Property rights and management. I further learned of a recent dispute between an IP rights owner and an entity in Kuwait that used the rights owner's music without consent and/or due compensation. This is a clear example of how IP rights are perceived in Kuwait but safeguards must be made by individuals and businesses to prevent being the

party to a litigation defending the non-consensual use of a 3rd party's IP.

Just for background knowledge, things that fall under the IP law include, without limitation, video footage, photographs, paintings, posters, music, sound effects, radio material, uniforms, vehicles, logos, books, magazines, newspapers, maps, and identifiable products and labels. Thus, if you plan on using any of the above-mentioned materials for commercial use that is not the original creation of your own or

business, then it is best practice to obtain permission prior to such use.

Obtaining the clearance to use a third party's IP should not require much paperwork, time or money. A simple one-page Materials Release that specifies the name of the rights holder, the name and description of the IP, how and where the IP will be used (e.g., territory, duration, repetition, etc.), the compensation (if any) for use of the IP, and the signature of the rights holder, would suffice as evidence of con-

sent for usage of a 3rd party's IP.

While there are exceptions to the restrictions of IP law, where a party can use 3rd party IP without prior permission, fair use doctrine, such use must meet certain criteria that is not always easy to prove. Further with the amount of content available in the world, if an IP rights holder is difficult then it is best to use a different source and/or simply create original content.

najmahbrown@aladwanilaw-firm.com

Kuwait calls for better business 'environment' in Arab countries

AMF chief hails Gulf states' adoption of dev strategies

MARRAKECH, Morocco, Jan 31, (KUNA): Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait Mohammad Al-Hashel Tuesday called on importance of improving business environment to push forward comprehensive sustainable development in Arab world.

Improving the business environment required a legislative and institutional framework which is lucrative to capitals, Al-Hashel said before a conference about prosperity and promotion of jobs and growth in Arab world.

The conference, held in the city of Marrakech, is co-organized by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Arab Monetary Fund and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development.

Al-Hashel also called for providing further backing to small and medium-size enterprises. "These enterprises form important horizons for the youth and women to enable them overcome unemployment challenge," he added.

IMF Director General Christine Lagarde called on policymakers in the Arab world to come up with a development plan that addressed economic and social challenges.

This development plan, she said, should include all segments of the society.

Lagarde said the Arab world was full of potentials among the youth, who were in need of policies triggering better business environment, private sector's bigger role and further SMEs support.

Abdullah Al-Humaidi, Director General of the Arab Monetary Fund, said unemployment was the biggest challenge facing the Arab world.

Challenge

"Defeating this challenge requires doubling of efforts as well as deep economic and social reforms," he said.

He said youth and women should have access to financial services.

Moroccan Prime Minister Saadouddine Othmani said Arab countries were facing huge economic and social challenges, topped by joblessness.

He said unemployment among youth and social differences posed a great challenge against economic growth and social stability.

Meanwhile, Director General of the Arab Monetary Fund Abdullah Al-Humaidi, praised the Arab Gulf countries adoption of integrated development strategies to diversify their economies.

Al-Humaidi's comments were echoed to KUNA on Tuesday on the sidelines of the "Opportunity for All: Promoting Growth, Jobs, and Inclusiveness in the Arab World" conference, organized by the International



Kuwait University President Prof Hussain Al-Ansari received the students from the Mechanical Engineering Department who obtained a patent for their graduation project.

The project supervisor Prof Khaled Al-Hazza also accompanied them in the meeting which was held in the presence of Vice-presidents for research Prof Laila Marouf and Prof Yousef Al-Qurashi.

The patent-winning project is a moving diameter

ball for cars that will be used to load trolleys to connect boats and vehicles. The patent was registered in the United States of America under the name of College of Engineering and Petroleum of Kuwait University.

Prof Al-Ansari congratulated the project supervisor and the students for realizing this marvelous scientific achievement, affirming the university's infinite support for these kinds of projects.



KCCI's Al-Omar receives group of trainees graduated from CMA

Deputy Director General of KCCI, Hamad Jarrah Al-Omar recently received a group of trainees who just graduated from the Capital Market Authority (CMA).

Al-Omar welcomed the new

graduates, affirming KCCI is always eager to receive trainees and to provide all necessary services to support them.

He stated sector is consistent in developing human elements, which he considered a major pillar of economic development

activities.

He expressed concern about graduates and their keenness to work hard to consolidate education while applying the experience successfully in the labor market to fulfill the requirements of private sector.

Roads maintenance in Ahmadi, Mubarak Al-Kabeer

MPW's plan includes KD 46.496m 11 contracts

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: Minister of Public Works Eng. Hussam Al-Roumi says the ministry's plan for the maintenance of roads in Ahmadi and Mubarak Al-Kabeer governorates.

The rest of the projects might have been floated for tender or the contract might have been signed in preparation for commencing the works.

The ministry, through these contracts, will carry out maintenance works to repair roads, and the sewage and rainwater drainage networks. The contracts are continuous as they

are worked on and are worth a total of KD 13.7 million for works in Ahmadi and Mubarak Al-Kabeer governorates.

Meanwhile, Undersecretary of Ministry of Public Works Eng. Awatif Al-Ghunaim revealed that she participated in the 2018 Dubai International Government Achievement Exhibition.

She said she met the officials of the company delegated by the government of Dubai to coordinate the ministry's participation in the exhibition.

Monetary Fund in Marrakech in cooperation with the Arab Monetary Fund and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and with participation from North Africa and the Middle East countries.

The challenges faced by the economies of the Arab Gulf countries, especially after the decline in the prices of oil in

world markets, have been an incentive for them to develop strategies based on accurate indicators, Al-Humaidi said.

The success of these strategies would lead to diversification of the economies of the Gulf countries and increase their resources so as not to depend on oil as a major supplier of economic activity, but oil



Abdullah Al-Humaidi

Muneera Mitlaq Sanad Al Mutairi, wife of Nasser Mohammad Al Wanai, 47 years old, buried on Wednesday. Condolences: Omariya St. 1, Block 4, House 26 Tel. 55120809-66640024. **Thuraya Abdul Aziz Ibrahim Al Dehaim**, widow of Abdulla Al Dehaim, 80 years old, buried on Wednesday. Condolences: (Men) Khalidiya, Abdullah Al Khalaf Al Saeed St. House 29 Tel. 993790044 (Women) Rawda, Block 1, St. 15, House 32 Tel. 99296789. **Qarnasha Isa Al Asoufi**, widow of Sulaiman Dawud Al Dawsani, 87 years old, buried on Wednesday. Condolences: (Men) Shuhada, Block 4, St. 404, House 13 Tel. 66514531 (Women) Rawda, Block 3, Shahab Al Bahar St. House 2. **Abdul Salam Nasser Al Ajouni Al Rasheedi**, 42 years old, buried on Wednesday. Condolences: Qairawan, Block 2, St. 204, plot 6 Tel. 99000886. **Mather Mohammad Ibrahim Sulaiman**, 61 years old, buried on Wednesday. Condolences: Daiya, Huseiniyat Bouhamad Tel. 51416019.

Jan 31, 2018

LOCAL



A group photo of the participants of the International Inventions Conference.

Al-Khorafi honors international umpires

On behalf of the organizing committee of the 10th Middle East International Inventions Conference, board chairman of the Scientific Club and chairman of the committee Talal Jassem Al-Khorafi recently honored 40 local and international umpires.

Al-Khorafi commended the pivotal role and unrelenting efforts of umpires that followed international rules to deal with 150 inventions placed under their microscope.

He revealed the umpires are well-experienced PhD holders with strong

scientific background who were selected after careful study.

They represented various scientific and academic institutions that have long history of judging inventions based on international standards.

1,000 companies, entrepreneurs to take part in Iraq confab: Al-Jarallah

US, EU firms jostling for seats: Al-Abadi

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait anticipates no less than 1,000 companies and businesspersons will partake in Kuwait International Conference for Iraq Reconstruction and Development (KICIRD) due in the country on Feb 12-14, the Deputy Foreign Minister said on Wednesday.

There will be broad participation in the conference by executives, companies and govern-

ments, said Khaled Al-Jarallah in a statement to journalists on the sidelines of a seminar organized by Kuwait Chamber of Industry and Commerce.

A large number of enterprises, envisaged as part of rebuilding Iraq, will be executed by the private sector and companies, he added.

As to the conference timetable, he said February 12 would be devoted for social institutions, the second for the private sector and the past for declaring financial contributions by participating states.

The conference, due to group donor countries, regional and in-

ternational organizations, will be chaired by the European Union, Iraq, Kuwait, the United Nations and the World Bank (WB).

Meanwhile, Iraqi Prime Minister Haidar Al-Abadi said on Tuesday there is huge pressure from several global firms to book places at a pledging conference for Iraq's reconstruction hosted by Kuwait.

At a press conference ahead of the Feb 12 talks, he said European companies have twice exceeded their share of assigned seats while the US has closed the door to further applications, adding there will also be a large turnout for regional firms.

Al-Abadi said this reflects these firms' keenness to enter the Iraqi market, and contribute effectively to rebuilding projects in Iraq, particularly amid the improved security situation in the country and diminishing fears of investors.

Iraqi officials have completed their preparations ahead of attending the conference, said the prime minister, who reiterated his gratitude for Kuwait's hosting and sponsorship of the event.

Over 400 international businesses are expected to attend the Kuwait-hosted talks alongside dozens of governments.



Dr Sultan Ahmed Ismail addressing the Salma Indian Model School teachers and students.

Dr Ismail highlights life science

SIMS organises session on simple tasks, great concepts

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: The Salma Indian Model School (SIMS) recently organised an interactive session with eminent ecologist Dr Sultan Ahmed Ismail under the title 'Simple tasks, great concepts'.

'Life science is an intriguing subject and a teacher teaching it should be excited to show the children some experiments which would be captivating, exciting, stimulating, absorbing and interesting', Dr Ismail told the audience.

Dr Ismail also spoke about the importance of making life science learning livelier by making concepts easier and went on to demonstrate the above with the use of simple day-to-day objects.

He feels 'Science without fun is futile and as teachers we should put in our best efforts to make life science teaching livelier'.

With examples, Dr Ismail, showed how 'talking' and 'teaching' can be different and how it affects the students.

Dr Ismail, who is also a well-known biologist, whose work centers on techniques for recycling biodegradable waste into fertilizer using local varieties of earthworms, and on soil bioremediation, is the Director, Eco Science Department, Chennai.

He works with the Department of Sci-

ence and Technology of the Government of India, in the development of a module on vermicomposting as a sustainable ecological practice for children.

He also conducted a project for the Environment and Forests Department of the Government of Tamil Nadu state for implementing vermicomposting in 50 schools in Chennai (Madras), and has given several lectures at more than 200 schools in India and abroad on environmental awareness, solid waste management and vermicomposting.

His other research interests are on the anti-inflammatory properties of earthworms, the ultrastructure of the penile setae of earthworms, and the electrical bioluminescence of earthworms.

Dr Ismail is the author of some famous books like: Vermicology: The Biology of Earthworms, The Earthworm Book, etc. He was awarded the Arignar Anna Award by the Department of Environment, Government of Tamil Nadu, India, for environmental education and awareness.

The truly informative session was attended by the Director of SIMS, Dr Anis Ahmed; Principal, Mrs Elizabeth Joseph; Vice Principal, Mrs Anita Sadanand; Senior Coordinator Mirza Jawed and the teaching staff.

Korea.

"North Korea's reckless pursuit of nuclear missiles could very soon threaten our homeland," he warned, implying he has a narrow window to respond to Pyongyang's ambition.

"We are waging a campaign of maximum pressure to prevent that from ever happening."

Mattis praises**Continued from Page 1**

airbase, and include on-base housing for the American service member and their families, new state-of-the-art schools, as well as building quality recreational entertainment and service facility," Al-Atiyah said. The initiative is set to be completed by 2040.

Meanwhile, Tillerson stressed Tuesday that Qatar has made "significant progress to improve efforts to combat terrorism," following President Donald Trump's "challenge to all of our Gulf partners" during the Riyadh summit last year.

Speaking at the US-Qatar Strategic Dialogue, Tillerson said that as a result of the memorandum of understanding the two countries signed in July, the US and Qatar have "increased information sharing on terrorists and terrorist financiers," and that they have participated in "counterterrorism technical training and taken steps to improve aviation security." He indicated other "critical" regional security issues will be discussed, including the ongoing battle to defeat the so-called Islamic State (IS), "DAESH, the Gulf dispute, the situation in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and Iran's role in the region." On the Gulf dispute, the US top diplomat said "as the Gulf dispute nears the eight-month mark, the United States remains as concerned today as we were at its outset. This dispute has had direct negative consequences economically and militarily for those involved, as well as the United States."

"We are concerned by the rhetoric and propaganda employed in the region, playing out daily in Arab mainstream and social media," he remarked.

He stressed that "it is critical that all parties minimize rhetoric, exercise restraint to avoid further escalation, and work toward a resolution."

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Fight until**Continued from Page 1**

to overthrow dictator Saddam Hussein and they became mired in a deadly insurgency.

Eight years later, and with American voters tiring of the grinding conflict, Obama withdrew the remaining forces, believing that US-trained local troops were ready to handle security.

But remnants of the local al-Qaeda faction were reborn as the Islamic State group amid Syria's civil war, seizing territory in that country and overrunning a swathe of Iraq in 2014.

US troops returned to the region to assist Iraqi and Kurdish forces which, backed by a global coalition, ousted the jihadists from a series of cities including Iraq's Mosul and Syria's Raqqa, IS's main强holds in the two countries.

Some in Washington argued the troops should now come home and that the 2001 vote in Congress to authorize strikes on al-Qaeda in the wake of the Sept 11 attacks no longer applies.

But Trump's administration believes that the 2,000 US special forces and additional support troops in Syria could help counter Bashar al-Assad's regime and his Iranian backers.

And they warn that if the US contingent is withdrawn too quickly, the IS group or an new jihadist successor could spring up from the ruins of Raqqa or Mosul to replace it.

"Past experience has taught us that complacency and concessions only invite aggression and provocation," Trump will tell Congress and American voters.

"I will not repeat the mistakes of the past Administrations that got us into this dangerous position," he will say, according to the extracts.

Nuclear threat

US President Donald Trump used his biggest stage Tuesday to warn of the nuclear threat from North Korea, as fears grow again in Washington that conflict may be looming.

In recent weeks, US officials have laid the groundwork for a pivot to strategies for a world of renewed great power competition with the likes of Russia and China.

In his State of the Union address to Congress and the nation, Trump described Moscow and Beijing as challenging "our interests, our economy, and our values." But he saved his harshest words for Iran and North



Top and above: A delegation of Kuwaiti lawmakers, headed by Speaker of the Parliament Marzouq Al-Ghanim headed to Geneva to attend meetings of the executive committee of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

Al-Ghanim leaves for Geneva

A delegation of Kuwaiti lawmakers, headed by Speaker of the Parliament Marzouq Al-Ghanim left Wednesday heading to Geneva to attend meetings of the executive committee of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

The Kuwaiti delegation will meet with Head of IPU Gabriela Cuevas Barron and Secretary General Martin Chun-

gong.

The visit also comes to refute recent complaints submitted by a number of Zionist deputies against the reputation of the State of Kuwait and its Parliament.

The delegation includes the secretary general of the National Assembly and a number of members of Parliament. (KUNA)

Just solution sought to Palestinian issue

'Settlements' condemned

BRUSSELS, Jan 31, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait called Wednesday for "a just, comprehensive and definitive solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, based on the two-state solution and relevant UNSC resolutions and international references and Arab Peace Initiative.

Speaking at the special session of the international donor group for Palestine in Brussels today, Kuwait's ambassador to the EU, Belgium, NATO and Luxembourg, Jasem Al-Budaiwi urged the commitment of the international community to the historical, religious and political status of the city of Jerusalem and the need to ensure that it is not compromised by any unilateral actions.

Further, he called for the condemnation of Israel's continued violation of resolution 2334 on its illegal and illegal settlement activities.



Al-Budaiwi

Al-Budaiwi urged the international community to support the activities of UNRWA as one of the most important United Nations agencies serving some 6 million Palestine refugees, to move away from any "politicization" of its activities and to preserve the nature of its humanitarian activities.

He stressed that the State of Kuwait has made every effort to support the Palestinian cause, which has always been the highest priority of its foreign policy.

Kuwait is committed to providing UNRWA with annual support of \$2 million and is contributing to the Agency's budget deficit and to meet its emergency needs over the past years, the last of which was to provide \$5 million to the Agency in the month of December. He expressed regret that the work of the technical commissions and international agencies, such as the Committee on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, has not achieved the desired goals because of the lack of political will and willingness of one of the parties to this protracted and protracted conflict.

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti Deputy Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah

Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah partakes in scheduled ministerial meetings at the Arab League headquarters on Thursday to re-examine the Palestinian cause namely the question of the holy city of Jerusalem.

Sheikh Sabah Khaled will participate in a meeting of the Arab Peace Initiative Committee, membership of which includes the State of Kuwait, and a meeting of the Arab League Ministerial Council, which is a follow-up session to be held as part of the council extraordinary session held on Dec 9, 2017.

Arab ministers and officials, during the December meeting, discussed ideas and proposed plans for facing repercussions of the United States' decision to "recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital" and shift the American embassy from Tel to the sacred city.

The two meetings will convene in light of the mini Arab ministerial meeting, hosted by Jordan on Jan 6, 2018, and on basis of the Arab League Council resolution, taken during the December extraordinary session, stipulating that the council would reconvene in a month.

The Arab states' officials had taken the decision to consider the council meetings as "open" for assessing "the situation" and seek to reach consensus on future steps in the face of Washington's step, as well as for intensifying efforts to reach a political settlement to resolve the Arab-Israeli strife and establish the independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Kuwait's delegation to the meetings includes the State of Kuwait's Ambassador to Egypt Mohammad Al-Thuwaikh, Assistant Foreign Minister for the Arab World Ambassador Aziz Al-Daihani, Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Premier Bureau Affairs Ambassador Saleh Al-Loughani, the State of Kuwait Permanent Delegate at the Arab League Ahmad Al-Bakr and senior officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Arab Peace Initiative is a 10-sentence plan for an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict, endorsed by the Arab League in 2002 at the Beirut Summit and re-endorsed at the 2007 Arab League summit and at the 2017 Arab League summit. The initiative calls for normalizing relations between the Arab states and Israel, in exchange for full withdrawal from the occupied territories (including East Jerusalem) and a "just settlement" to the Palestinian refugee problem based on UN Resolution 194.

Israel has rejected the Arab peace plan and Washington's recent decision on Jerusalem has further complicated efforts for paving the way for a viable settlement to the conflict, start of which dates back to the 40s of the past century.

News in Brief

Citizen's death probed: The remains of a citizen who was found dead inside his vehicle were referred to forensics to determine the cause of death, says Al-Seyassah.

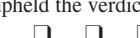
A security source said the Operations Room of the Interior Ministry was notified about the incident and a team of rescue men went to the scene to deal with the situation. Initial investigation suggested the citizen did not die of natural causes and detectives suspected foul play. A case was registered for investigation.



Fined in insult: The Civil Court ordered a Kuwaiti citizen to pay KD 4,000 to a detective working in Ministry of Interior as compensation for humiliating and insulting him while he was on duty, says Al-Seyassah. In a lawsuit filed by Lawyer Abdulmohsen Al-Qattan on behalf of the detective, he claimed that the suspect humiliated and insulted his client in public while he was on duty in a manner

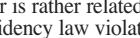
that tarnished his honor and reputation.

The Misdemeanor Court had issued a final judgment by fining the accused KD 50 on each charge and referring the case to the concerned civil court but the defendant did not accept the ruling and appealed against it at the Appellate Circuit of the Misdemeanor Court, which however upheld the verdict.



Report rejected: Security Sector denied recent news circulated on social media saying GCC registered vehicles can not leave the country until traffic fines registered against them are settled, indicating the circular is rather related to the deportation of residency law violators and not vehicles, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

As per the circular issued by Assistant Undersecretary for Checking in the Ministry of Interior, violations registered from Jan 24, 2018 are exempted from the decision that allows violators to leave the country without paying related fines.



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DIWANIYA

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

دیوانیة

'Powers unable to distort history'

'Palestine cannot be wiped off map'

"NEITHER Israel nor world of Zionism, even if it combines Russia, China and India, will be able to change the facts and forge history in the hope of wiping Palestine off the map, the human memory, the international archives in a bid to Judaize Jerusalem," columnist and the Director of Al-Shahed TV *Hesham Al-Diwan* wrote for *Al-Shahed* daily.

"In the meantime, both the Arabs and Muslims will not be in a position to stop the tide of Zionist Christians and those who are involved in manipulative practices to support Israel while they (the Arabs and Muslims) are in a bad state now, unless they unite."

"As a matter of fact, the Arab-Arab consensus and the Arab-Islamic union will be capable of dealing Israel a deadly blow. I say Israel, because the latter is currently depending on all foes of Arabism and Islam, and by the term Arabism I mean Arab Christian, Jews and the followers of some other religions."

"And in order not to fall in the same Israeli pit, we have to review our dealing with the others irrespective of their races, religions, doctrines and colors. Israel is a religiously racist state and the group that governs the world through money, business and the world's major and minor interests. The conditions are now being created by Israel as a Jewish state, a religious state with no non-Jews and no Muslims and Christians."

"In this context, I say that I don't think that the appearance of the Islamic State (IS) or the so-called 'DAESH' on the map of the world with tremendous potentials and undeclared international and American support was formed without pre-preparation."

"In other words, 'DAESH' is not a plant, let alone that Abu Baker Al-Baghdadi, who declared himself as the Khalifa of this terrorist organization, irrespective of his real name and irrespective of the places in which he was trained to play his current role."

"But the Group stood watching the violence in Iran and the demonstrators as spectators. In other words, the Group did not support those who called for democracy, rather implicitly or overtly supported the Iranian authorities against the demonstrators and this was applicable also to the attitude of the Turkish government which at the moment represents the stronghold for the elements of the Group. We say this because the Turkish leader is currently seen as the spiritual leader of the Group."

"In other words, Turkey was the major supporter of the Syrian people's intifada (uprising) which erupted in March 2011. Not just that, it is Turkey that appealed to the world to intervene and support the Syrians against the ruling regime."

"But in dealing with the demands of the Iranians during the protests, it is Turkey which supported the regime in Tehran and called on the Iranians to keep calm and avoid violent behavior. Not just that, it is Ankara which called on the world not to interfere in the internal affairs of the Iranians and the Turkish president was quoted as saying 'it would not be possible for us to accept the intervention of some states in affairs of Iran'."

"However, this happened although it is the Turkish president who led the intervention in Syria and other Arab countries."



Al-Diwan

"Such being the case, DAESH is an invention and before that the organization of the so-called 'Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi' and before the latter the al-Qaeda network that was responsible for carrying out the 9/11 attacks. However, all these projects, in which they wanted to distort the image of Islam were carefully planned and in accordance with international projects that were backing them through international resolutions to justify the Israeli declaration of the founding of the theocratic state with a single religion."

"But once again, I would like to repeat that the success of Israel and its supporters be it the United States or Britain it will be impossible to support Israel although these countries are currently ruled by those who adopt the American Christian Zionist viewpoint."

"I say this although Britain is a state of institutions and values, especially since the opposition Labor Party which came to power

in 1997 under the leadership of the former prime minister Tony Blair stayed in power for three consecutive terms but at the moment this party sits in the opposition."

Also:

"Since its establishment under the leadership of Hassan al-Banna in 1928, the Muslim Brotherhood was in constant conflict with the governments, both in its founding country Egypt and in the rest of the Arab countries to varying degrees of conflict because of its policies that threatened the security and stability of their countries, and its permanent attempt to grab power and declare others as infidels," columnist *Faisal Mohammad Bin Sabe* wrote for *Al-Qabas* daily.

"This policy was followed by Sayed Qotob (one of the prominent leaders in the Group) who throughout his life, he and his followers were committed to the application of the same for long years."

"In the long years since its establishment, the group had adopted the principle of double standards in dealing with the events that surround it, so as not to harm their interests and the interests of their followers, and if this led to the destruction of their countries and the displacement of their people, as long as they are safe from this destruction and homelessness."

"The abnormal method of the group was clear during the past few weeks during the Iranian people's revolution against the ruling power because of the low living conditions and the lack of real democratic life (we are talking about the group's behavior rather than the protests of the Iranian people)."

"The leaders of the group in our country and their counterparts abroad, who supported the demonstrations in various Arab countries, were demanding the change of regime which they saw as corrupt, and the elimination of the dictatorial regimes."

"But the Group stood watching the violence in Iran and the demonstrators as spectators. In other words, the Group did not support those who called for democracy, rather implicitly or overtly supported the Iranian authorities against the demonstrators and this was applicable also to the attitude of the Turkish government which at the moment represents the stronghold for the elements of the Group. We say this because the Turkish leader is currently seen as the spiritual leader of the Group."

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"However, this happened although it is the Turkish president who led the intervention in Syria and other Arab countries."



"We know Filipinos and have dealt directly with them in our houses and workplaces throughout the country for more than 40 years. We know them for their sincerity, diligence, high ethics, constant smile, perfection and quality," *Saleh Al-Shayeqi* wrote for *Al-Anba* daily.

"Had it been not for these qualities and characteristics that distinguish Filipinos, traders and businesspeople would not have



sought their assistance in running businesses and contributing so much profit."

"They are professional people who come to work with a smile that does not go away. They are very energetic and possess an optimistic spirit. They exert efforts and energy more than what is required of them."

"Our children who are in their 30s and less have been very lucky to have been brought up by a Filipina babysitter who serves as a teacher and caregiver with a mother's touch. She treats babies like her own or perhaps even better than her own."

"Some may disagree with me here, recalling a certain incident with a Filipina worker. They might be right because a rule must have some anomalies in it. Therefore, what I have described here might not apply to all Filipinos; there is no doubt about that."

"I deeply regret the current situation between our country and the Republic of Philippines. That country is protesting the ill-treatment and abuse her people are facing in Kuwait to such an extent that President Duterte has threatened to ban sending Filipino workers to Kuwait."

"I think President Duterte is right to fear for his people. He is concerned for their safety and dignity because we unfortunately have some people who are very abusive to their domestic workers or any other worker. We have nothing in our laws that enable workers to submit a complaint to the concerned authorities to preserve their life, dignity and humanity. The government is required to do its duty and protect expatriates of all nationalities at all levels. If it is unable to do so, it must not bring them to Kuwait."



"It is not difficult for someone who steals or embezzles KD 33 million to pay a bribe of KD 1 million to the one who helps him escape from Kuwait," *Talal Al-Saeed* wrote for *Al-Seyassah* daily.

"In brief, the thieves gave up a small sum for keeping most of the stolen money. This small sum was the price of their freedom and prosperity not only for themselves but also for their children and grandchildren as well."

"Certainly, it cannot be just one thief who managed to leave Kuwait despite the travel ban imposed on him, and he will not be the last one to do so as long as there are traitorous employees at the borders to facilitate his escape either via sea to Iran or the airport or truck heading to Iraq or via the Kuwaiti-Saudi borders without an exit seal on his passport. In all these cases, the crime will not succeed without the help of dishonest employees who help the thief."

"Now, the thief we are referring to here is a Syrian millionaire who managed to escape despite a travel ban issued against him. He was arrested by the Interpol and he will be brought back to Kuwait for investigations on the way he managed to escape from Kuwait. Will the full names of he and those who helped him escape be revealed or they will be identified only by the initials of their names?"

"Actually, the arrest of the criminal by the Interpol is not the most important part of the issue. What is really important is the way he escaped despite the travel ban. It is a fact that we have not heard any stories about border employees who refused bribes or called the investigations department to trap a briber."

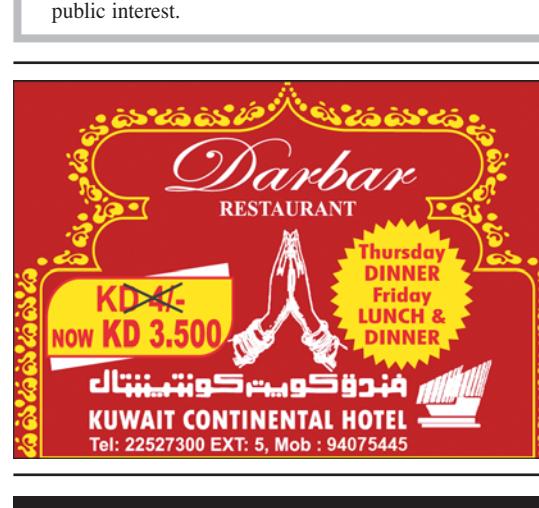
"This issue is really serious. The briber who pays such large sums of money is escaping from a huge crime. He could be a member of a criminal network that can be arrested if he is arrested first. The solution is to tackle the corrupt environment, and not limiting to just the arrest of one or two involved employees."

— Compiled by Zaki Taleb

List of deportees eyed

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: A security source said the Assistant Undersecretary for Public Security Affairs at the Ministry of Interior Major-General Ibrahim Al-Tarrah has given instructions to security managers in all the governorates of Kuwait and security chiefs to send him the list of residence law violators, reports *Al-Anba* daily.

He also wants the names of absconders included in that list to prepare their deportation from the country in public interest.



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LOCAL

Other Voices

Need for little gratitude

By Ahmad Al-Sarraf

Reader Shawn said she enjoys reading my articles when I criticize those who say things which she finds inappropriate and this is her right and the right of millions of others who work among us and make living easy in Kuwait.

She added that healthcare is expensive, and other things too, which can be understood in light of the scarcity of state resources, but she cannot understand all this hostile atmosphere, undesirable behavior against her and all honest and loyal people working in Kuwait.

Some always still insist on reminding that 'they' are expatriates, and that they should be grateful for Kuwait's acceptance of them.

She says such behavior has a negative impact on the psyche and productivity of the residents; and the price is paid by everyone. She also says she saw how wonderful and loving people have left Kuwait to work elsewhere in other parts of the world because of the unjustified psychological pressure they were subjected to, and because they felt their presence was not welcome.

She says she has been working in the field of education for 12 years. She came to Kuwait with the intention of working for one year and then move on to another country, but fate kept her in Kuwait and she made Kuwait her second home.

Shawn is European and in Kuwait she earns a little more than what she would in her home country, but her sense of security and friendship made her stay longer than she had planned.

She went on to say, she felt very sad



Al-Sarraf

over the past few years because of the continued feelings of hostility and arrogance of some 'people'. She was seriously considering leaving her second home after she discovered what she is doing is not being appreciated.

She added the article which I wrote about the role of expatriates made her feel comfortable and happy, and that there are those who appreciate her work and respect her presence, although they don't know her personally.

Reader Mohammad Jawad said 'hats off to you' and for what I wrote about the vital role of residents in the progress and reconstruction of Kuwait.

Lavina says that what I wrote was the most beautiful thing she has ever read in the Kuwait press.

Chandy, with eyes filled with tears, wrote to me, because she felt that there is at least one citizen who decided to thank the residents and appreciates what they had 'given' him over the years.

She might have overcome with despair because she lost her mother recently. Her mother came to Kuwait in 1962, and that until the last day of her life was not happy. There are countless others who have written about various issues.

I do not write this to boast or criticize, but to show that those who live among us have their dignity and feelings. They are human beings like us and often better than us. Why not treat them with an iota of decency to show humanitarian side and get the best they can give us, and draw a smile on their faces?

I lived and worked in Britain for years a dignified life, enjoyed all my rights and there was no reason not to be treated like them, fully aware that they do not need me as much as we need our residents which makes them deserve better treatment.



email: habibi.enta1@gmail.com

Court Cases

Petitions on hold

'Stormers' case with top judge

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: The office of the Special Public Prosecutor recently completed its legal opinion concerning the case famously known as "storming of the parliament", and referred it to the Head of the Court of Cassation Judge Ahmad Al-Ajeel who will set up a date for consultations on the appeal and requests made by the defense to suspend the verdict issued in this regard.

According to informed sources, the prosecution has settled on nullifying the verdict of the Court of Appeals based on the fact that the defense was unable to legally argue the case at the court.

The registrar office of the Court of Cassation Sunday stopped receiving petitions in this regard due to end of the legal period for submitting petitions. It has set next Sunday for receiving requests for suspension of the verdict.

The Public Prosecution has submitted two petitions, while petitions were submitted on behalf of many of the defendants through their lawyers.

In their petitions, the defendants had faulted the presence of security forces and armored personnel near the parliament building, which was in violation of the Constitution of Kuwait.

They also faulted the report issued by the Public Prosecution which claimed that the National Assembly building is a building in the hands of the state, and demanded nullification of the supplementary accusation report and the appealed verdict which ac-

quitted them.

On the other hand, the Public Prosecution had requested tougher punishments to be imposed on those involved in the storming of the country's National Assembly building in 2011. The defendants include current and former MPs and dozens of their supporters.

The Court of Appeals had sentenced 28 defendants to five-year imprisonment with hard labor for "using force and inciting unrest". The court issued jail terms ranging from six months to three years with hard labor to 23 others "for their violent and criminal actions." It also issued two-year jail terms with hard labor against 49 other defendants for "inciting the police to revolt". Five others who were accused of "mobbing and assaulting police officers" were sentenced to two-year imprisonment and ten defendants were sentenced to one-year jail terms.



'Morally damaged': Attorney Elaf Al-Saleh has filed a lawsuit to demand for temporary compensation of KD 5,001 from a divorcee and her mother who accused her client of molesting his own daughter.

Al-Saleh affirmed she will protect her client's right as this blatant false allegation offended and harmed him morally when news on the alleged molestation spread.

She stressed the abhorrent course taken by the divorcee and her mother should be fiercely and decisively contested in court to serve as deterrent for those contemplating on defaming anyone.

By Munaif Nayef and Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: Due to the amnesty period that came into effect two days ago, thousands of expatriates who are in violation of the residency law have been thronging the embassies of their countries for receiving a temporary travel document "Laissez-passer", which will allow them to travel without their passports.

According to security sources, about 450 expatriates have so far benefited from the amnesty by exiting the country.

The amnesty, which was declared by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrab, targets 154,000 individuals who are in violation of the residency law as per the records of the Immigration Department of Ministry of Interior. The amnesty is an opportunity for residency law violators to either exit the country without paying the relevant fines or rectify their residency status. Those who exit the country during the amnesty period from Jan 29 to Feb 22 will be able to return to the country after their cases have been settled.

The sources revealed that Kuwait International Airport, on the first day of the amnesty period, witnessed the exit of 200 expatriates who were in violation of the residency law, adding that 250 others left on the second day.

However, the sources indicated that majority of those who travelled were unaware of the amnesty, stressing that the issuance of temporary travel documents for those without their passports, which are usually in the possession of their sponsors, takes time.

They explained that the amnesty also allows the residency law viola-

Death for woman, lover in child murder

US man acquitted in drugs case

Jail for ex-govt officials in forgery

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: The Criminal Court has sentenced the former Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health to two years imprisonment with hard labor, reports Al-Jarida daily.

He is convicted of forging a university certificate from the Arab Republic of Egypt for his son.

Meanwhile, the Court of Appeals has overturned the verdict of the lower court which had sentenced a US citizen to five years imprisonment and fined him 1,200 dinars, reports Al-Anba daily.

The Appeals Court has acquitted the man of the charges of possessing, trafficking and consuming psychotropic substances.

tors to exit from any port or border. The immigration departments at the airport and land border checkpoints have the authority to carry out all necessary procedures for issuing exit clearance to residency law violators. However, those involved in pending criminal cases are not included in the amnesty, and can only exit the country after their cases have been settled.

Agencies add:

Death for murder: The Criminal Court has issued death sentence against a Kuwaiti woman and her friend who are convicted of the murder of her daughter.

Lawyer Ali Al-Ali, who is representing the father of the victim, said in a press release that the verdict should serve as a deterrent to anyone without a conscience and intends to commit such crimes.

He urged the court to sentence the two defendants to death for the crime

they are proven to have committed. According to the case file, the crime was discovered on August 5, 2017 when the Kuwaiti woman notified the police about the death of her daughter inside her house in Adan area.

A police officer from Mubarak Al-Kabeer Police Station rushed to the location along with paramedics. However, the paramedics, after confirming that the child is dead, refused to take the corpse due to the obvious marks on the child's mark which indicated foul play. Forensic Medicine officers were summoned to the location and they recorded the traces of beatings on the neck, face and chest of the child as well as burns on her left arm.

When securitymen interrogated the mother, she revealed that she is divorced and is in an affair with her friend. In an attempt to clear herself from any involvement in the crime, she

said her boyfriend beat her daughter to death during a picnic. However, the second suspect indicated that the mother was also involved in the crime.

Al-Rifai charged: The Public Prosecution Department charged Al-Rifai for insulting the Shiite sect based on complaints filed by the Interior Ministry and some lawyers, reports Al-Jarida daily.

The court concluded the action of Al-Rifai is in violation of the law and issued a verdict against him in absentia since he is out of the country. However, he has the right to appeal the verdict upon his return from abroad.

Legal action vowed: The Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) said it works in total transparency in all areas of its work and is ready to clarify any disputed issues, reports Al-Seyassah daily. The company in a press statement said the KOC has set up a fact-finding committee on the issue of what it called 'suspicious corruption activity' following rumors spread by some sources.

The committee, is headed by Deputy Chief Executive Officer for Commercial and Planning Affairs Emad Sultan, and comprises senior officials from the company. The committee has the mandate to operate independently in public interest and transparency.

News in Brief

FM meets GCC chief: Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah Wednesday met with visiting GCC Secretary-General Abdul-Latif Al-Zayani.

During the meeting they addressed action programs and plans for the GCC Secretariat's sectors to put in place resolutions taken during the 38th GCC summit held in Kuwait on Dec 7, 2017, given that Kuwait holds the current rotating presidency of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

Several senior officials of the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry were present at the meeting. (KUNA)

Workers attacked: A Kuwaiti citizen was arrested for assaulting workers at a barber shop in a cooperative society as well as a Kuwaiti woman in her 60s for no apparent reason, reports Al-Rai daily.

The workers at the barber shop were shocked when the citizen broke into the shop, started assaulting them, broke the glass of the shop's facade and then attacked a Kuwaiti woman who was passing by. The workers refrained from filing a complaint but the woman insisted on doing so. Securitymen arrested the citizen and referred him to Psychology Medicine Hospital for treatment.

Boy hurt in mishap: A 14-year old Kuwaiti boy sustained injuries when he was hit by a vehicle driven by an Asian expatriate in Sabahiyah area, says Al-Seyassah.

According to security sources, when the Operations Room of Ministry of Interior received information about the accident, securitymen and paramedics rushed to the location to discover that a passerby had referred the boy to the hospital. The Asian expatriate who works as a driver was arrested. When questioned, he said the victim suddenly crossed the road in front of his vehicle and he was unable to stop his vehicle on time. Securitymen took necessary action.

Meanwhile, a Kuwaiti citizen sustained injuries when his vehicle collided with another on Sixth Ring Road near Jleeb Al-Shuyukh area.

60 expats evacuated: Firemen from three fire stations rushed to a 10-floor residential apartment in Farwaniya and put out fire to an apartment on the third floor, reports Al-Shahid daily.

According to fire sources, 60 expatriates were evacuated and one was rushed to a hospital for treatment of asphyxiation.



KFSD team, officials and workers pose for a picture at the site.

KFSD photo

KFSD team visits Al-Kout Mall project

Deputy Director General of Fire Prevention Sector at Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) Major General Khalid Abdullah Fahad and his accompanying delegation paid an inspection tour of the new Al-Kout Mall project in Fahheel area.

According to a press release issued by KFSD, the visit was based on directives of

KFSD Director General Lieutenant General Khalid Al-Mekrad to ensure compliance with the prevention measures and conditions by major projects in the country.

Major General Abdullah Fahad was accompanied by the Director of Ahmadi Fire Prevention Department Eng. Mohammad Boland, Supervisor of Inspection and Follow

up Affairs Colonel Yousef Al-Sa'afak, Project Manager Colonel Ahmed Al-Jazaf and License Manager Lieutenant Colonel Saud Al-Jimi.

The new Al-Kout Mall is located on an area of 250,000 square meters and consists of 217 commercial shops. It is considered as one of the biggest commercial projects in Kuwait.

450 expats leave without fine, thousands to avail of amnesty

Death for woman, lover in child murder

US man acquitted in drugs case

Jail for ex-govt officials in forgery

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: The Criminal Court has sentenced the former Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health to two years imprisonment with hard labor, reports Al-Jarida daily.

He is convicted of forging a university certificate from the Arab Republic of Egypt for his son.

Meanwhile, the Court of Appeals has overturned the verdict of the lower court which had sentenced a US citizen to five years imprisonment and fined him 1,200 dinars, reports Al-Anba daily.

The seven included drivers of sewage tanks, trucks carrying debris and managers of companies who have contributed in the pollution of soil and sea.

The sentences ranged from

three years imprisonment to a 20,000 dinars fine for each of the accused, while the Environment Public Authority has demanded 15 million dinars for damages.

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HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah with HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah during a luncheon banquet held in his honor at Azayez Farm in Abdaly.

Number of Filipino politicians criticize president's decision

Suspension should only be tied to cases of emergency

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: A number of Filipino politicians, writers and officials through the Philippine newspapers and media have criticized the Philippine president's decision to suspend the employment of Filipino workers to Kuwait under the pretext of 'violations' committed against Filipino workers, which have been denied by Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reports Al-Qabas daily.

The Manila Times published an article by writer Francisco S. Tatad in which he has strongly criticized the decision of the president and said: "In case of emergencies, affecting the safety and well-being of the public as a whole, the government may suspend the posting of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in a certain destination.

"This happened in places like Libya during the Arab Spring. But it is absurd to threaten the recall of all OFWs in a

particular jurisdiction just because of one or two incidents in which the state had such absolutely no involvement.

"Kuwait is a country of 4.2 million people, of whom 1.3 million are Kuwaitis, and 2.9 million expatriates. Of the 2.9 million, an estimated 250,000 are Filipinos. Should any Filipino ever figure in any crime, whether as perpetrator or as victim, the first thing our government should do is to investigate and determine all the facts before making a statement," Tatad added.

Philippine News quoted an unnamed senior diplomat as saying: "I disagreed with the Philippine government's handling of the Philippine employment issue in Kuwait, and that the president or any other government official may be ill-advised in making hasty pronouncements without prior consultations with the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Government of Kuwait.

The Inquirer Newspaper went a mile further and published an article by Tess E. Manzano, under the title 'Stopping the Filipinos from leaving' in which he strongly criticized the decision of the Philippine President who called on the workers in Kuwait to return to their homeland.

Manzano said: "Wasn't it only some decades ago during the Iraq war when our government offered to repatriate Filipino housekeepers with a majority of them preferring to stay in those

Muslim countries?"

"Is it lack of education or of information about abusive foreign employers that drives so many Filipinos to slavery overseas? Doesn't it denote a lack of faith and hope in this nation's leaders for countless women to leave their families to work in danger zones abroad?" he asked.

"Has a study been made to see how our economy would fare if remittances were to end," he wondered.

A group of recruitment agencies in Manila has warned of a massive drop in dollar remittances amounting to over \$1.3 billion if the government pushes through with a permanent deployment ban of OFWs to Kuwait. Over 270,000 documented workers are now employed in Kuwait.

A permanent deployment ban will also harm our friendly relations with the Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, UAE, Qatar and Yemen which together play host to 1.5 million Filipinos who bring in the bulk of our dollar remittances yearly to almost \$28 billion.

The families of the 270,000 workers in Kuwait are apprehensive over the continuous barrage of statements from President Rodrigo Duterte that he would not hesitate to issue a permanent deployment ban to Kuwait if the Filipino workers are not treated humanely.

Kuwaitis without

Continued from Page 1

in the university, we visited a schoolmate belonging to the royal family. We sat in a shaded backyard and there was a pool in front of us. We suddenly saw a lady with Asian features walking beside the pool while holding the younger brother of our host Sheikh.

We were surprised by the view of a nanny who looked different from the ones we see in our houses among the domestic workers, most of them were from Arab countries or the Indian peninsula at the time.

Our schoolmate Sheikh told us that she, the nanny, is from the Philippines. We were surprised up to the point of saying, "Definitely, Sheikh has a lot of money to bring a nanny from the Philippines."

Days went by and our sisters in humanity from the Philippines filled our houses, hospitals, beauty parlors, health and medical centers and every aspect of our lives. Despite their huge number, all we hear about them is good reputation, hygiene, discipline and sincerity at work.

We cannot imagine ourselves living without them after all these years of pampering just because of some sick people amongst us. They are the ones who are not dealing with these humans like humans in terms of their living conditions, wages, privileges, vacations and days off which they deserve.

In fact, some deal with the female ones with the 'slavery' mentality (God forbid). This is the cause of Duterte's fury over us alone, not the other GCC countries where the number of Filipinas is much greater than those in Kuwait.

We hold the government, security and justice agencies responsible for not enforcing the law on those who abuse and violate simple laws of humanity; who are individuals affiliated to every Kuwaiti, given that majority of them deal with their employees fondly and humanely, simply because they cannot or rather it is difficult to live without them.

KPC plans

Continued from Page 1

fast-emerging oil superpowers, the United States and Brazil.

Adsanai also told the conference that KPC intended to lift domestic oil refining capacity to 2.0 million bpd by 2035, while ensuring maximum off-take of domestic heavy oil production and taking into consideration the need to meet local energy demand.

KPC recently began a pre-feasibility study to lift refining capacity inside Kuwait to increase to 2.5 billion cubic feet per day in 2040, from 0.5 billion cfd expected in April 2018 and 1 billion cfd by 2023, Adsanai said.

The company intends to expand into downstream derivative and specialty petrochemical products at facilities inside and outside the country, Adsanai added.

Meanwhile, non-associated natural gas production in Kuwait is to increase to 2.5 billion cubic feet per day in 2040, from 0.5 billion cfd expected in April 2018 and 1 billion cfd by 2023, Adsanai said.

As part of efforts to reduce emissions of harmful gases, KPC's future power plants will be gas-fired, although it will use renewable energy when that makes commercial sense, he added.

MPs renew

Continued from Page 1

stressing the need to hold accountable those proven to have neglected their duties.

Meanwhile, MP Riyadh Al-Adansi, who spoke at the session against the no-confidence motion, said: "Today, I stand up to defend the truth. I will respond to all controversies surrounding the documents I have. Everyone knows that the State Audit Bureau confirmed in its report that the minister has started rectifying errors in the ministry."

He added the minister referred the social aid file to the Attorney General, addressed the visa trading issue, and continues to fight against those who tarnished the reputation of Kuwait in the international community.

He affirmed the minister took legal procedures in handling the affairs of people with special needs. "We do not tolerate corruption. They grilled the minister because she stopped the disbursement of social aid to 66 dead people," he asserted.

He said he would have been the first to vote in favor of the no-confidence motion if it was proven that there are financial irregularities in cooperative societies.

On the other hand, MP Osama Al-Shaheen, who voted in favor of the no-confidence motion, explained he is against the minister's policies and decisions concerning vital sectors like the cooperative societies, special needs, workers in private companies, housewives and social aid beneficiaries.

He hopes the minister will be committed in overseeing mega projects, major contractors, negotiators and influential persons.

He added the interpellation and no-confidence motions convey a certain message to the minister, her successor and the officials in affiliate bodies that Sharia Law and national legislation should be applied properly for the benefit of the disabled, cooperative societies, mothers, widows and the needy among others.

South Yemen

Continued from Page 1

delivered via United Nations agencies and Kuwaiti charities.

"Moreover, the State of Kuwait

has launched development schemes through Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), exceeding \$400 million to finance development projects in brotherly Yemen.

"However, flare-up of the fighting and conditions' deterioration have led to cessation of these projects' execution for which funds have been earmarked." The Deputy Foreign Minister added that Kuwait will resume the humanitarian action once conditions have been stabilized for sake of contributing to the forecast reconstruction, as part of the international community efforts to rebuild the infrastructure and other facilities demolished in the conflict.

Three days of deadly clashes between southern Yemeni separatists and an internationally recognised government based in the port of Aden subsided on Wednesday after fighters handed back two military bases they had seized, residents said.

The detente followed mediation by a Saudi-led military coalition, which is trying to halt the worst infighting yet among its allies in a wider war against the Houthi movement that controls northern Yemen, including the capital Sanaa.

The separatists aim to restore the independent state of Southern Yemen, which united with northern Yemen in 1990. They have fought alongside forces of the government of President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, but rose this week and seized control of Aden after Hadi refused to sack his prime minister.

The Aden-based government and the separatists are both allies of the Saudi-led coalition, although the separatists are seen as friendlier with the United Arab Emirates while Hadi's main patron is Saudi Arabia, where he lives in exile.

Separatist military units gained full control of Aden on Tuesday with the exception of a fortified presidential palace housing the prime minister's cabinet. But the fighters ceded two bases later on Tuesday.

"Government institutions were handed back and the (southern) militias withdrew," a government source told Reuters.

Residents reported that banks and businesses reopened on Wednesday as traffic resumed on the streets after many people spent days indoors fleeing from combat which killed at least 20 fighters.

The separatist leader Aidaroos al-Zubaidi speaking on Tuesday to France 24 Arabic TV, said his side remained loyal to Hadi and had no plans to quit the battle against the Houthis.

"We've asked the president ... to fire the government and appoint a caretaker government in its place," Zubaidi said. "We ask the Arab coalition to take control and assume its duty to this people and these bad conditions."

The conflict has pushed Yemen, already one of the Arab world's poorest countries, toward humanitarian collapse as hunger and disease spread.

The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) said on Wednesday that the latest fighting had hindered access to people in need.

"UNHCR emergency aid distributions and humanitarian assessments planned this week for vulnerable, displaced Yemenis have now been postponed and UNHCR humanitarian cargo remains at Aden port unable to be released," the group said.

Yemeni ministers were holed up in Aden's presidential palace on Wednesday after separatist forces seized effective control of the southern port city, dealing another blow to the country's embattled government.

The United Nations agency for humanitarian affairs reported a "cautious calm" in the city, but damage to aid distribution channels and donor nation confidence had already been inflicted.

Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah said the infighting in Yemen's de facto capital had prompted his country to halt multi-million dollar development programmes.

In Aden, pro-separatist forces backed by the UAE known as the "security belt" fanned out across the city after three days of fighting that left 38 people dead.

The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia have backed the beleaguered government of President Hadi since intervening against Shiite Houthi rebels in Yemen's civil war in March 2015.

But the Arab allies, whose military coalition was launched to roll back rebel gains and restore Yemen's "legitimate" government to power in Sanaa, have not intervened to prop up Hadi against his separatist rivals.

The coalition has instead urged the separatists to exercise restraint and called on the government to weigh up the demands of its rivals.

While Yemen's president resides in the Saudi capital, the power struggle in the anti-Houthi camp has left Prime Minister Ahmed bin Dagher and a number of senior government figures holed up in the Aden presidential palace.

A high-ranking military source said the separatists had also taken over bin Dagher's office chief overnight.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, or OCHA, said staff were able to work a half day Wednesday, citing a "cautious calm" after separatists seized most of the city from government loyalists.

"Some shops have re-opened in the city and civilians have been able to move out of their homes to stock up on essential supplies," it said, adding however that most schools remained closed and entry points for aid cut off.

"There are still no humanitarian flights or vessels into or out of Aden. The VOS Apollo is still anchored in international waters off the Aden coast," OCHA said.

At least 38 people have been killed and 222 wounded in Aden since Sunday, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The UN earlier Wednesday raised alarm bells over the impact of the violent standoff on more than 40,000 Yemenis recently displaced to Aden, saying planned aid distributions had been postponed with cargo stuck at Aden port.

Since 2015, Aden had served as a

refuge for tens of thousands of Yemenis fleeing conflict in their hometowns across the country, as the Saudi-backed government battled Houthi rebels allied with Iran.

Kuwait — which according to its deputy foreign minister has pledged \$100 million to UN aid agencies in Yemen and another \$400 million through its own development fund — has suspended its contributions in light of the recent fighting.

"What is happening in Aden is regrettable and painful," Khaled Al-Jarallah told the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"Meaningless and unjustified fighting will only worsen Yemen's wounds," he said, calling on all parties to restore calm.

Separatists, mainly based in Aden, have gained traction since April in their push for self-rule, accusing Hadi's government of corruption and demanding the reinstatement of South Yemen under a Southern Transitional Council.

In his first public appearance since the clashes erupted, STC chief Aidaroos al-Zoubidei stressed the separatists were still fighting alongside the Arab military coalition, which has staunchly backed Hadi for three years against the Houthi rebels.

"We have warned this failure of a government time and again that the economic situation in the south in particular, and Yemen in general, was unbearable and that they had no choice but to heed the demands of the people of Aden, and of Yemen," Zoubidei told France24 via satellite link.

He declined to confirm the STC had its sights set on forming its own government, saying: "the people of south Yemen have the right to determine their own future when the international community responds".

The clashes have sparked fears of a repeat of South Yemen's 1986 civil war, a failed socialist coup which killed thousands in just six days and helped pave the way for the 1991 unification of South and North Yemen.

The separatists, who enjoy popular support and are backed by some regular troops, rapidly gained control over all but one district in Aden since Sunday.

Newswatch

Continued from Page 1

reports of rising civilian casualties.

On Wednesday, French President Emmanuel Macron warned he would have a "real problem" with Turkey's intervention if it turned into a full-blown "invasion." (AFP)

SOCHI, Russia: Russia's showcase Syria congress aimed to bring seven years of war closer to an end Tuesday, but closed without a significant breakthrough after a string of boycotts and last-minute cancellations.

Around 1,400 delegates attended the meeting in the Black Sea resort of Sochi, as part of a broader push by regime-backer Moscow to consolidate its influence in the Middle East and start hammering out a political solution to the conflict. (AFP)

LONDON: An Iranian-American dual citizen and his wife have been sentenced to 27 and 16 years in jail respectively, the husband said in a letter from prison published on human rights websites.

Karan Vafadari, a US citizen, and Afarin Neysari, a US permanent resident, were arrested in July 2016. They own an art gallery, and they were first accused of hosting parties for foreign diplomats and possessing alcoholic drinks at home. (RTRS)

CAIRO: An Egyptian court has sentenced 19 Muslim defendants to a one-year suspended sentence for attacking an unlicensed church south of Cairo.

Wednesday's sentence was handed down in Atfih misdemeanor court. The defendants will not have to serve prison time unless they get into trouble again. (AP)

GENEVA: The UN human rights office said Wednesday that 206 companies — mostly Israeli and American — are facing a review of their business practices involving Israeli settlements, which are considered illegal under international law.

In the long-awaited report, the office said more resources were needed to handle the complex and unprecedented task of compiling what some critics call an unfair "blacklist" and a sign of alleged anti-Israel bias at the UN. (AP)

TEL AVIV: The United States pledged continued support for Lebanon's military on Wednesday, calling it a potential counterweight to Iranian-backed Hezbollah, even as Israel said the two forces were indistinguishable and fair game in any future war.

Such a public difference of opinion between two close allies was remarkable enough, but especially so as it was sounded by officials at the same event — an Israeli security conference. (RTRS)

WASHINGTON: One person was killed when a train carrying US lawmakers to a retreat in West Virginia slammed into a garbage truck Wednesday, the White House said, adding that no members of Congress were hurt.

"There is one confirmed fatality and one serious injury. There are no serious injuries among members of Congress or their staff," White House press secretary Sarah Sanders said in a statement, adding that President Donald Trump has been briefed on the accident. (AFP)

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World News Roundup

Budget

Deadlock deflates hopes

Talks bogged down by immigration and deficit

WASHINGTON, Jan 31, (AP): A week after a stand-off forced a three-day government shutdown, congressional budget talks remain bogged down by Democrats' demands to protect "Dreamer" immigrants and GOP conservatives' concerns about a booming federal deficit.

The deadlock is deflating hopes that lawmakers will reach a breakthrough before another shutdown deadline next week.

At risk are up to \$80 billion in increases for the Pentagon this year alone, and nearly as much money for domestic programs. Almost \$100 billion worth of overdue assistance for hurricane-slammed Puerto Rico, Texas and Florida is being held up.

The knot involves about \$1.2 billion in agency operating budgets for the fiscal year that began in October, along with hurricane relief, President Donald Trump's \$18 billion-plus border wall, and other odds and ends.

Meadows

The measure has been hung up for months as lawmakers in both parties struggle first with a deal to increase tight limits on spending that are left over from a failed 2011 budget agreement. It takes both Republicans and Democrats to lift the limits, called spending "caps" in Capitol-speak. But talks have proceeded slowly and are now awaiting agreement on legislation to address younger immigrants currently protected from deportation under the soon-to-expire Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA.

But there are other problems afoot. Conservatives say Republican and Democratic proposals on the table would balloon the deficit, sending it over \$1 trillion by next year.

"That's a non-starter for conservatives," said Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., chairman of the hard-right House Freedom Caucus.

The House Tuesday instead passed — for the third time — a \$659 billion Pentagon funding measure. The bill would break the existing budget cap for defense by \$73 billion — almost \$20 billion more than the budget Trump proposed last year. The 250-166 vote House vote broke mostly along party lines.

The move was aimed at turning up the heat on Senate Democrats, several of whom face difficult re-election bids in states won by Trump.



New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman joins Dreamers and recent immigrants for a news conference after a DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) hearing at a Brooklyn court on Jan 30, in New York City. (AFP)

America

Senate takes rare path: For the first time in nearly 30 years, the Senate has confirmed a judicial nominee without a seal of approval from a home state senator.

The 56-42 vote Tuesday to confirm David Stras of Minnesota demonstrates anew Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's resolve in getting President Donald Trump's judicial nominees confirmed.

The Republican-led Senate went ahead with a committee hearing and a vote for Stras despite one of his home state senators, former Democratic Sen. Al Franken, declining to return what is referred to as a "blue slip." Franken's replacement, Sen. Tina Smith, also opposed his confirmation to the US Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. Franken had said he feared Stras would steer the already conservative court further right. Minnesota's other senator, Democrat Amy Klobuchar, voted to confirm Stras.

The blue slip is a 100-year tradition designed to foster consultation between a

president and senators about judicial nominees from their home state. Over the years, senators could derail a vote by not returning their blue slip. The last time a judge was confirmed without two blue slips was 1989. (AP)

SC refuses to stop execution: The US Supreme Court on Tuesday night rejected two appeals from a Texas death row inmate, clearing the way for his execution for the 1999 slaying of his ex-girlfriend while he already was on parole for killing his estranged wife.

McConnell

Stras

William Rayford, 64, would be the nation's second inmate executed this year, both in Texas. He was convicted in the beating, stabbing and strangling death of 44-year-old Carol Lynn Thomas Hall.

Hall's body was found about 300 feet (91 meters) inside a drainage pipe behind her home in the Oak Cliff area of Dallas. Her 11-year-old son was also stabbed in the attack but survived, and he testified against Rayford. Rayford's lawyers lost two appeals before the high court to halt the execution, which was scheduled for around 6 pm CST but was delayed until appeals were resolved.

They argued that his death sentence was tainted because his trial attorney in 2000 improperly introduced the subject of race as a factor in prison violence while questioning a prison expert during the punishment phase. Nadia Wood, a Dallas-based federal public defender, told the high court that in bringing it up, the trial lawyer implied "that people like Mr. Rayford — a black man — are the cause of the violence." (AFP)

NY expands police cameras: The New York Police Department, the largest



O'Neill

city police force in the United States, announced Tuesday that all patrol officers and detectives would be equipped with body cameras by the end of 2018.

Officials said the rollout was a year ahead of schedule and expressed hope that it would be a decision replicated by other forces around the country, amid ongoing outcry over the deaths of unarmed — often African American — men at the hands of police in disputed circumstances.

New York's police force began a body-camera pilot program in December 2014, six months after the death of father-of-six Eric Garner in a police chokehold was among those that sparked nationwide protests.

The acceleration of the program will see 18,000 officers outfitted and trained by the end of the year, de Blasio said. Police commissioner James O'Neill said 2,200 police officers currently wear the body cameras. The preliminary budget for the accelerated rollout includes \$5.9 million this year, \$12 million in 2019 and \$9.5 million in 2020, officials said. (AFP)

□ □ □

Mueller seeks to interview Corallo: Special counsel Robert Mueller is seeking to interview the former spokesman for President Donald Trump's legal team as part of his investigation into alleged Russian meddling in the 2016 US presidential election, according to a person with knowledge of the matter.

Mark Corallo was the spokesman for several weeks, representing Trump's outside lawyers amid the federal and congressional Russia inquiries, until he resigned last summer. No interview date has been set, according to the source, who asked not to be identified given the ongoing investigation.

Mueller's team is also investigating whether there was any collusion between Moscow and the Trump campaign.

Corallo's departure in July came amid other staff changes and media reports that Trump's legal team was reorganizing and considering ways to try to limit Mueller's probe.

US intelligence agencies have determined that Moscow worked to sway last year's election to Trump. Moscow has denied any interference and Trump, a Republican, has said there was no collusion.

Mueller, a former FBI director, was appointed in May to lead the federal investigation, which so far has resulted in guilty pleas from former Trump national security adviser Michael Flynn and former campaign aide George Papadopoulos. (RTS)

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World News Roundup



US President Donald Trump delivers the State of the Union address at the US Capitol in Washington, DC, on Jan 30, 2018. (AFP)

Brexit

Finance 'divisive issue'

EU 'rejects' Brexit proposal for banks

LONDON, Jan 31, (RTRS): European Commission officials have rejected the City of London's proposal to strike a post-Brexit free trade deal on financial services, a major blow to Britain's hopes of keeping full access to EU markets for one of the world's top two financial centres.

Since Britain voted to leave the EU 19 months ago, some of the world's most powerful finance companies in London have been searching for a way to preserve the existing cross-border flow of trading after it leaves the bloc in 2019.

Officials from the European Union's executive told British financiers in meetings in recent weeks they won't agree to a deal that would allow finance companies to operate in each others' markets without barriers because Britain has said it will leave the single market, according to two people who attended the meetings.

The City's plan proposed that Britain and the EU would allow cross border trade in financial services on the condition that each side preserve regulatory standards in line with the best international standards. This model would be maintained by close co-operation between regulators and financial policy-makers.

The proposals were the most detailed on how a long-term agreement on financial services with the EU may work after Brexit, with papers setting out how a pact could be structured and policed, and it has been endorsed by Britain's Brexit minister **David Davis**.

But EU officials are dismissive of any trade models that would see Britain retain similar levels of market access while leaving the single market regime.

"They have made it very clear to us that this is unacceptable to them," said one senior British finance executive present at one of the meetings. "This was our best and frankly only proposal. We don't have a plan B."

Sterling slipped against the dollar and euro on Wednesday news of the rejection.

Britain's vast financial services looks set to be one of the most divisive areas in the Brexit negotiations, with Britain demanding a generous deal while the EU refuses to shift from its insistence that Britain's red lines -- such as ending the free movement of workers from the EU -- make that impossible.

Britain is currently home to the world's largest number of banks and hosts the largest commercial insurance market. About six trillion euros (\$7.47 trillion), or 37 percent, of Europe's financial assets are managed in the UK capital, almost twice the amount of its nearest rival, Paris.

In addition, London dominates Europe's 5.2 trillion euro investment banking industry.

But unless it can secure a trade deal, for all its geographic proximity, Europe's largest financial capital will end up adrift with the same access to the EU as other countries like Singapore.

Britain's finance minister Philip Hammond warned Europe last week that hurting London's financial centre would push business to New York and Singapore to the detriment of Europe as a whole, and he called for a bespoke trade deal with the EU.

The rejection of the proposed trade deal represents a second setback for the City of London, which had initially pinned hopes on Britain maintaining "passing" in financial services after Brexit.

European Union negotiators see no room for discussion with Britain on passporting, diplomats in Brussels said on Wednesday.



Davis

State of Union

US president summons country to a 'new American moment' of unity

Trump warns of immigration peril, touts economy

WASHINGTON, Jan 31, (AP): Addressing a deeply divided nation, President Donald Trump summoned the country to a "new American moment" of unity in his first State of the Union address, challenging Congress to make good on long-standing promises to fix a fractured immigration system and warning darkly of evil forces seeking to undermine America's way of life.

Delivering his biggest speech of the year, this most polarizing of presidents sought to put the spotlight on a robust economy, while pointedly calling on a packed joint session of Congress to enact tough curbs on immigration.

"Tonight, I call upon all of us to set aside our differences, to seek out common ground, and to summon the unity we need to deliver for the people we were elected to serve," he said.

"Tonight, I want to talk about what kind of future we are going to have, and what kind of nation we are going to be. All of us, together, as one team, one people, and one American family."

Trump's address Tuesday night blended self-congratulation and calls for optimism amid a growing economy with ominous warnings about deadly gangs, the scourge of drugs and violent immigrants living in the United States illegally. He cast the debate over immigration — an issue that has long animated his most ardent supporters — as a battle between heroes and villains, leaning heavily on the personal stories of White House guests in the crowd. He praised a law enforcement agent who arrested more than 100 gang members, and he recognized the families of two alleged gang victims.

He also spoke forebodingly of catastrophic dangers from abroad, warning that North Korea would "very soon" threaten the United States with nuclear-tipped missiles.

Greatest

"The United States is a compassionate nation. We are proud that we do more than any other country to help the needy, the struggling and the underprivileged all over the world," Trump said. "But as president of the United States, my highest loyalty, my greatest compassion, and my constant concern is for America's children, America's struggling workers and America's forgotten communities."

Trump addressed the nation with tensions running high on Capitol Hill. An impasse over immigration prompted a three-day government shutdown earlier this year, and lawmakers appear no closer to resolving the status of the "Dreamers" — young people living in the US

illegally ahead of a new Feb. 8 deadline for funding operations. The parties have also clashed this week over the plans of Republicans on the House intelligence committee to release a classified memo on the Russia investigation involving Trump's presidential campaign — a decision the White House backs but the Justice Department is fighting.

The controversies that have dogged Trump — and the ones he has created — have overshadowed strong economic gains during his first year in office. His approval ratings have hovered in the 30s for much of his presidency, and just 3 in 10 Americans said the United States was heading in the right direction, according to a poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. In the same survey, 67 percent of Americans said the country was more divided because of Trump.

At times, Trump's address appeared to be aimed more at validating his first year in office than setting the course for his second. He devoted significant time to touting the tax overhaul he signed at the end of last year, promising the plan will "provide tremendous relief for the middle class and small businesses." He also highlighted the decision made early in his first year to withdraw the US from a sweeping Asia-Pacific trade pact, declaring: "The era of economic surrender is totally over."

Potential

He spoke about potential agenda items for 2018 in broad terms, including a call for \$1.5 trillion in new infrastructure spending and partnerships with states and the private sector. He touched only briefly on issues like health care that have been at the center of the Republican Party's policy agenda for years.

Tackling the sensitive immigration debate that has roiled Washington, Trump redoubled his recent pledge to offer a path to citizenship for 1.8 million young immigrants — but only as part of a package that would also require increased funding for border security, including a wall along the US-Mexico border, ending the nation's visa lottery method and revamping the current legal immigration system. Some Republicans are wary of the hardline elements of Trump's plan and it's unclear whether his blueprint could pass Congress.

"Americans are dreamers too," Trump said, in an apparent effort to reclaim the term used to describe the young immigrants in the US illegally.

A former New York Democrat, the president also played to the culture wars

that have long illuminated American politics, alluding to his public spat with professional athletes who led protests against racial injustice by kneeling during the national anthem, declaring that paying tribute to the flag is a "civic duty."

Republicans led multiple rounds of enthusiastic applause during the speech, but for the opposition party it was a more somber affair. Democrats provided a short spurt of polite applause for Trump as he entered the chamber, but offered muted reactions throughout the speech.

A cluster of about two dozen Democrats, including members of the Congressional Black Caucus, remained planted firmly in their seats, staring sternly at the president and withholding applause.

The arc of Trump's 80-minute speech featured the personal stories of men and women who joined first lady Melania Trump in the audience. The guests included a New Mexico policeman and his wife who adopted a baby from parents who suffered from opioid addiction, and Ji Seong-ho, a defector from North Korea and outspoken critic of the Kim Jong-un government.

Terrorist

On international affairs, Trump warned of the dangers from "rogue regimes," like Iran and North Korea, terrorist groups, like the Islamic State, and "rivals" like China and Russia "that challenge our interests, our economy and our values." Calling on Congress to lift budgetary caps and boost spending on the military, Trump said that "unmatched power is the surest means of our defense."

Trump's biggest foreign policy announcement of the night concerned the Guantánamo Bay detention center, which former President Barack Obama tried but failed to close. Reversing Obama's policy, Trump said he'd signed an executive order Tuesday directing the Pentagon to keep the prison open while re-examining the military's policy on detention.

Trump said he was also asking Congress to ensure the US had needed powers to detain Islamic State group members and other "terrorists wherever we chase them down," though it was unclear what he was referring to a new war powers authorization or some other mechanism. Trump also said he wanted Congress to pass a law ensuring US foreign aid goes only "to America's friends" — a reference to his frustration at US aid recipients that voted at the UN to rebuke his decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

Mrs. Trump arrived at the Capitol

ahead of her husband to attend a reception with guests of the White House, but she rode back to the White House with him. It was the first time she was seen publicly with the president following a report that his lawyer arranged a payment to a porn star, Stormy Daniels, to prevent her from talking about an alleged affair. Daniels denied the affair in a new statement released hours before the speech.

Trump made no mention of the federal probe into whether his campaign colluded with Russia in the 2016 presidential election, a controversy that is dogging his presidency. Trump has denied collusion and has called the probe a "witch hunt."

The speech was short on details about Trump's policy proposals.

Sober

But his sober, measured approach was welcomed by the public. A CNN/SRS snap poll said 48 percent of those surveyed had a "very positive" response to the speech and 22 percent "somewhat positive."

There was little sign of unity inside the House of Representatives chamber where Trump spoke. Republican lawmakers cheered wildly at the president's applause lines. Democrats often sat in their seats silently and many booted when he laid out his immigration proposals.

Soaring stock prices under President Donald Trump have boosted investor portfolios and corporate profits but have not eased the economic anxieties of middle-class families. Massachusetts Rep Joe Kennedy III said Tuesday night in the Democratic response to Trump's first State of the Union address.

In calling on Americans to reject the "chaos" of the Trump era, Kennedy also outlined a Democratic vision that promises a "better deal for all who call this country home." Democrats support a higher minimum wage, paid leave for employees and affordable child care, among other priorities, Kennedy said.

"We choose pensions that are solvent, trade pacts that are fair, roads and bridges that won't rust away, and good education you can afford," he said in a speech from a vocational high school in Fall River, Massachusetts, a one-time manufacturing hub now struggling with high unemployment and other problems.

Kennedy, 37, a three-term congressman and grandson of former Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, has argued that Democrats should focus on the economic concerns of working-class voters who bolted the party in the 2016 elections.

Britain

Osborne hoped to kill Corbyn: A man accused of deliberately driving a van into a group of London Muslims told his trial on Tuesday that he wanted to kill the British opposition leader **Jeremy Corbyn**.

Darren Osborne said killing the leftist Labour leader would have been "one less terrorist off our streets", while killing Labour



Osborne



Corbyn

London Mayor Sadiq Khan as well "would have been like winning the lottery".

Osborne is accused of murdering 51-year-old Makram Ali and trying to kill others in the Finsbury Park area of north London on June 19 last year, after growing angry at recent terror attacks and child sexual exploitation scandals involving gangs of mainly Muslim men, the trial has heard. (AFP)

Min defends abortion ban vote: Irish

women are having abortions regardless of a near-total constitutional ban on terminating pregnancies, the country's health minister said Tuesday in defense of a planned referendum that will ask voters whether the amendment should be repealed.

Health Minister Simon Harris said on Ireland's RTE television that he is beginning work on a proposed abortion law that would be submitted to parliament if the May referendum removes the constitutional ban. The legislation would allow abortions during the

World News Roundup

Asia

'Manila Rights improving'

Fukushima's worst-hit reactor easy to clean

OKUMA, Japan Jan 31, (Agencies): High atop Fukushima's most damaged nuclear reactor, the final pieces of a jelly-roll shaped cover are being put in place to seal in highly radioactive dust.

Blown apart by a hydrogen explosion in 2011 after an earthquake and tsunami hit Japan's Fukushima Dai-ichi plant, reactor Unit 3 is undergoing painstaking construction ahead of a milestone that is the first step toward dismantling the plant.

The operating floor – from where new fuel rods used to be lowered into the core – has been rebuilt and if all goes as planned, huge cranes will begin removing 566 sets of still-radioactive fuel rods from a storage pool just below it later this year.

It has taken seven years just to get this far, but now the real work of cleaning up the Tokyo Electric Power Co. plant can begin.

"If you compare it with mountain climbing, we've only been preparing to climb. Now, we finally get to actually start climbing," said Daisuke Hirose, an official at the plant's decommissioning and decontamination unit.

Cleaning up the plant's three reactors that had at least partial meltdowns after the earthquake and tsunami is a monumental task expected to take three to four decades. Taking out the stored fuel rods is only a preliminary step and just removing the ones in Unit 3 is expected to take a year.

Still ahead is the uncharted challenge of removing an estimated 800 tons of melted fuel and debris inside the cracked containment chambers – six times that of the 1979 Three Mile Island accident.

The area in and outside of Unit 3 is part construction site and part disaster zone still requiring protection from radiation. A makeshift elevator, then a wind-swept outdoor staircase, takes visitors to the operating floor, more than 30 meters (100 feet) above ground.

Daylight streams in through the unfinished section of the new cover, a tunnel-like structure sealed at both ends to contain radiation. An overhead crane that moves on rails stands at the side of the storage pool, the maker's name, "Toshiba," emblazoned in large red letters.

The explosion left major chunks of debris that have been removed from the storage pool, a painstaking operation done using remote-controlled machinery and with utmost care to avoid damaging the fuel rods. Smaller rubble lines the pool's edge. The water's surface is obscured by a blue netting to prevent more debris from accidentally tumbling in.

The severe damage to Unit 3 has, in the end, made it easier to clean up than the other two reactors.

Under the latest government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe roadmap approved last September, removal of the fuel rods from units 1 and 2 was delayed by three years until 2023, a second postponement from the original 2015, because further decontamination and additional safety measures are needed.



'N. Korea soon to perfect ICBM': North Korea has taken fresh strides in its nuclear missile program but has not shown all the technologies needed to strike America, a US general said Tuesday, as another top official warned such a capability is just months away.

PyonYang has demonstrated its rockets are powerful enough to reach the United States, but General Paul Selva, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said it has yet to prove that its fusing and targeting technologies can survive the stresses of ballistic missile flight.

"They have made some strides but it's still true that they haven't demonstrated all of the components of an intercontinental ballistic missile system," Selva told reporters.



US optimistic' on Philippine record: The United States is "cautiously optimistic" that the Philippines' human rights record is improving as President Rodrigo Duterte presses on with his bloody anti-drug campaign that has claimed thousands of lives, an official said Tuesday.

Duterte has made a harsh anti-drug campaign the centerpiece of his administration, urging policemen to kill drug suspects and promising to protect them from prosecution.

The brutal drug war frayed ties with Washington under former-president Barack Obama who criticised Duterte's human rights record.



Philippines deploys plane to shoal: The Philippine military deployed a Japanese-donated patrol plane Wednesday to a disputed shoal guarded by China in the South China Sea, and the aircraft did not encounter any Chinese resistance, officials said.

The military's Northern Luzon Command said the Beechcraft King Air C90 flew low at 800 feet (240 meters) around Scarborough Shoal on its first mission for the Philippine navy. It said it spotted nine Chinese vessels, including four Chinese coast guard ships, and four Philippine fishing boats.

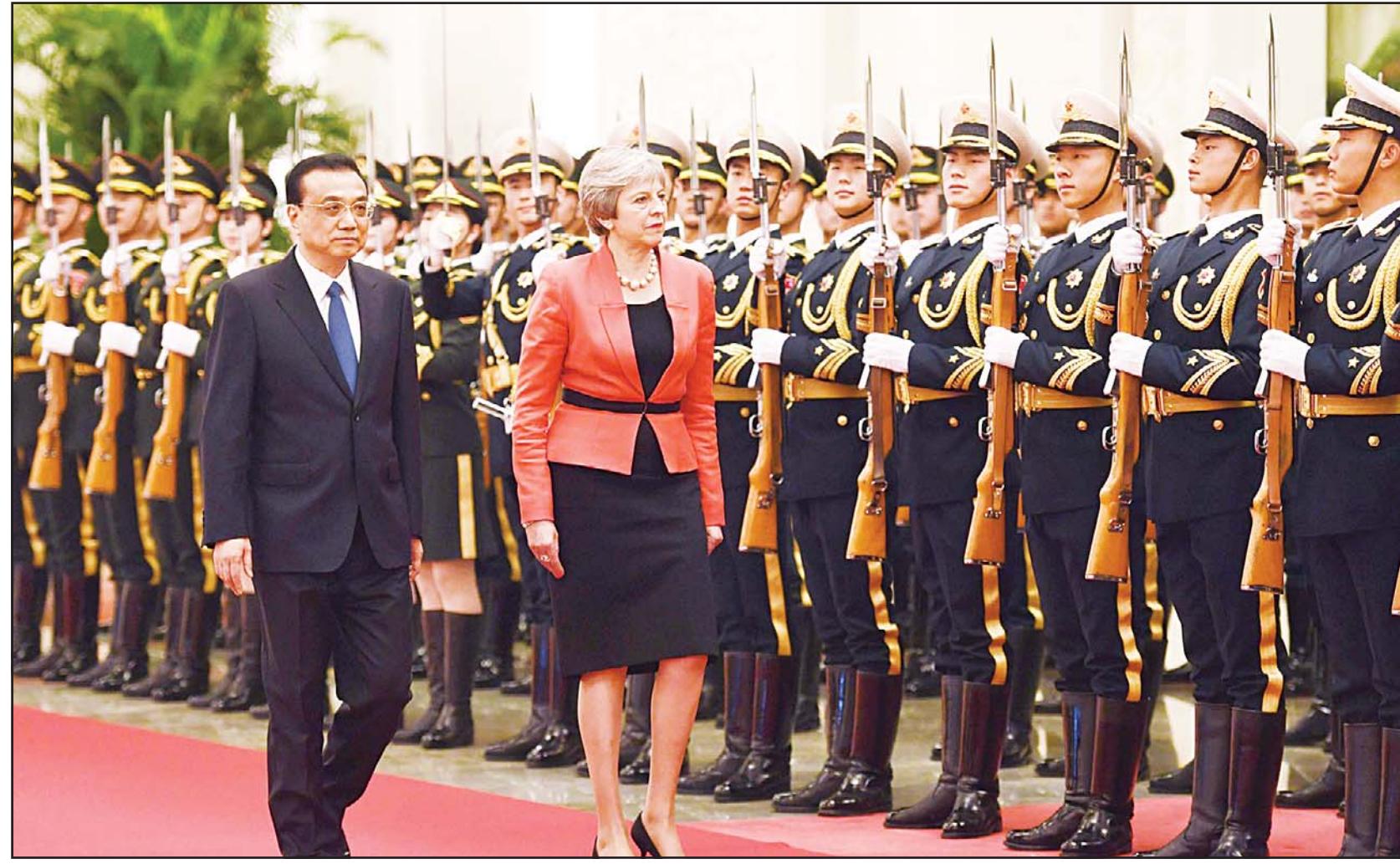
"The Filipino pilots heard no challenge from the Chinese coast guard," the military command said in a statement, referring to the practice of Chinese forces to warn foreign vessels or aircraft by radio that they have entered Chinese-claimed territory and should leave immediately.



Over 80 people on missing Kiribati ferry: Authorities confirmed on Wednesday that a missing Kiribati ferry had held more than 80 passengers, as Australian and U.S. planes scoured the central Pacific ocean for survivors, more than a week after it sunk.

The 17-metre (56-foot) catamaran was reported missing on Jan. 20, two days after it departed Nonouti Island on a 250 km (155 miles) trip to Betio in Kiribati.

Seven people rescued from a drifting dinghy on the weekend said the ferry broke up soon after setting out on Jan. 18 and that they had seen other passengers scramble aboard a liferaft, which was now the focus of the aerial search.



British Prime Minister Theresa May (center), reviews a military honour guard with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang during a welcome ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Jan 31. May is on a state visit to China as she seeks to bolster her country's global trade links ahead of its departure from the European Union. (AFP)



The Indian Navy's third Scorpene-class submarine 'Karanj' is pictured at its launch ceremony at the Mazagon Dock Shipyard in Mumbai on Jan 31. (AFP)

Subcontinent

Quake rattles Kabul, Pak: A strong magnitude 6.1 earthquake rattled Pakistan and Afghanistan on Wednesday, including the capital cities of both countries, killing a young girl and injuring 15 others, officials said.

The US Geological Survey reported the quake's center was in northeast Afghanistan near the Pakistan border, about 35 kilometers (22 miles) south of Jarni in the Hindu Kush region. It had a depth of 191.2 kms (119 miles).

TV footage showed people in Islamabad fleeing offices and schools in panic. (AP)



Bus accident kills 43 people: Indian rescue workers on Wednesday recovered another body from a canal where a bus fell earlier this week, reportedly while its driver was talking on his cell phone, bringing the death toll to 43.

District Magistrate P. Ulganathan said rescuers were continuing to search for four people still missing after the bus plunged

Britain

May wants free trade deal with Beijing

UK, China tout 'golden era' of relations

BEIJING, Jan 31, (Agencies): China and Britain touted their "golden era" of relations on Wednesday as Prime Minister Theresa May visited Beijing to strengthen her country's global trade links before its contentious divorce with the European Union.

May brought a large business delegation for her three-day visit, which began earlier in the day in the central industrial city of Wuhan and continued in the Chinese capital.

May is battling criticism of her Brexit strategy back home. The House of Lords is scrutinising a key piece of legislation on quitting the EU as a leaked government report shows only economic downsides to leaving the bloc.

Britain's ties with China have grown in importance as London contemplates its economic future after it officially leaves the EU in March 2019.

May was greeted at the imposing Great Hall of the People by Premier Li Keqiang, who noted that the prime minister was visiting Beijing ahead of next month's Chinese New Year, also known as the Spring Festival.

"I believe that a visit in the early spring will bring new fruits, which will further raise the golden era in China-

Britain relations. I'm willing to exchange views on issues of mutual concern with you," Li said.

May said their meeting was an opportunity to "consider how we can build further on that golden era and on the global strategic partnership that we have been working on between the UK and China".

"I think there is much that can be done in the trade area," she said.

May is accompanied by her husband Philip and a delegation of 50 business leaders and organisation representatives, which her office said was "the largest" her government has ever taken overseas.

May will also have the opportunity to discuss a wide range of other issues, including climate change and North Korea, but she was also under pressure to address the political situation in former colony Hong Kong and human rights abuses in mainland China.

China also has high expectations that London will endorse its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a massive infrastructure project aimed at reviving ancient Silk Road trade routes between the East and West and creating greater market access for Chinese companies.

The British government, however, has

been less sanguine about the project, with May's spokesman saying that while the idea holds promise, it is "vital that BRI projects meet international standards".

She will hold talks with President Xi Jinping on Thursday and finish her visit Friday in the eastern business hub of Shanghai.

Before her trip, the former British governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten, urged May to address concerns about the political situation in the semi-autonomous city, which London handed back to Beijing in 1997.

In a letter to May's Downing Street office, Patten said Hong Kong was facing "increasing threats to the basic freedoms, human rights and autonomy" which its people were promised after the handover.

Human Rights Watch also urged the British leader to "get tough with China" on rights.

Meanwhile, Britain is seeking a free trade agreement with China, Prime Minister Theresa May said on Wednesday as she flew to the country for talks with Chinese leaders, adding that more should be done immediately to open up market access for British firms.

seas military base in Djibouti, near one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, deepening Indian insecurities and pushing it to gain a foothold in the region.

The agreement signed in the Seychelles' capital of Victoria last weekend provides for India to develop the airfield and jetty on the Assumption islands, near another shipping route. (RTRS)

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INTERNATIONAL

Lat/Am

Kenji Fujimori expelled from party**Top court rejects Lula's bid to block his 'arrest'**

RIO DE JANEIRO, Jan 31, (Agencies): A high court judge on Tuesday rejected a request by lawyers for former Brazilian President **Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva** to block his arrest for a graft conviction that was upheld last week.

Attorney Cristiano Zanin asked the Superior Court of Justice in the capital of Brasilia to prevent arrest of the left-leaning politician until all his appeals have been heard. Hours later, Justice Humberto Martins denied the request, saying there was no immediate threat of arrest for da Silva, who was president in 2003-2010.

A three-judge panel voted unanimously last week to uphold da Silva's corruption and money laundering conviction and increased his sentence from 9 years to 12 years and one month in prison. One of the judges said then that the former president should be arrested as soon as the court explains details of the ruling to the defense, a process that usually takes a month.

Prosecutors say da Silva was promised an apartment as a payoff from a construction company in return for government contracts. He denies any wrongdoing and says the trial, which was one of the fastest to go through the court based in the southern Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, was rigged.

Da Silva's appeal could ultimately be heard by the country's highest court, the Supreme Federal Tribunal, also in Brasilia.

Fujimori expelled from party: Kenji Fujimori, the youngest son of recently pardoned ex-president Alberto Fujimori, said Tuesday that he was thrown out of his opposition party for clashing with its leader, his sister Keiko.

"It was unanimously decided that congressman Kenji Fujimori would be

expelled from Fuerza Popular (Popular Force)," he said on Twitter.

The populist-conservative FP began proceedings in December against Kenji Fujimori for having criticized his sister's position on President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski.

Venezuela talks move forward: Venezuela's government and opposition pushed on Tuesday with talks aimed at soothing their country's political crisis, but President Nicolas Maduro's bid for virtually unopposed re-election in early polls weighed heavily on the negotiations.

The government's chief negotiator, Communications Minister Jorge Rodriguez, said "electoral guarantees" for the vote would be on the table as was the issue of US economic sanctions that have worsened Caracas' precarious finances.

Mexico to tackle crimes: More than 5,000 federal security forces are being deployed across Mexico this week as violent crime has surged in popular tourist areas such as Los Cabos and Cancun, the interior minister said Tuesday.

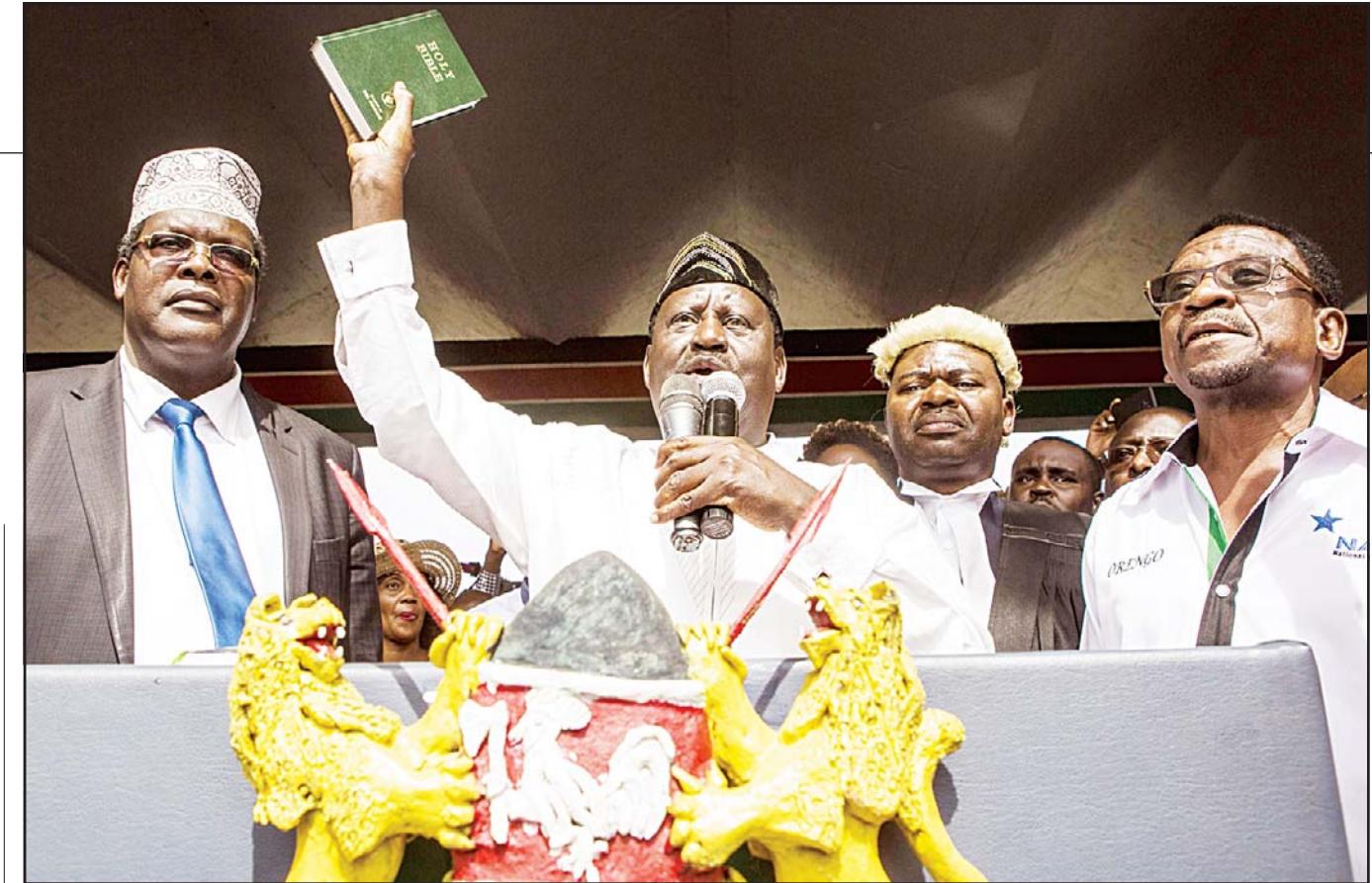
The non-military forces will work to "swiftly reduce these levels of rising violence," Interior Minister Alfonso Navarrete told reporters, noting that neither the army nor navy was involved.

Topping the list of places the mostly federal police were reinforcing were the city of Tijuana in the northwest just south of the US city of San Diego and the popular Los Cabos resort area in Baja California Sur from Los Cabos to La Paz.

Colombia rebel seek ceasefire: Colombia's last rebel group, the ELN, on Tuesday called for a new ceasefire and the resumption of frozen peace talks with the government as the prospect of open conflict flared anew following a string of deadly attacks.

The ELN, or National Liberation Army, said it "hopes" the government will attend peace negotiations that had been set for Wednesday in Ecuador's capital Quito.

"It was unanimously decided that congressman Kenji Fujimori would be



Kenya's opposition National Super Alliance (NASA), coalition leader Raila Odinga (second-left), holds up a bible as he swears-in himself as the 'people's president' on Jan 30, 2018 in Nairobi. Kenyan opposition leader Raila Odinga had himself sworn in as an alternative president on Jan 30, in front of thousands of supporters, despite warnings from authorities that this was treason. (AFP)

Africa

Funding appeal launched: UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, together with humanitarian partners, today, launched an inter-agency funding appeal for \$157 million to help over a quarter of a million people affected by the Boko Haram insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin region.

The 47 UN agencies and humanitarian organizations, who joined the 2018 Nigeria Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRRP), will cater for the needs of some 208,000 Nigerian refugees and 75,000 of their hosts in Niger, Cameroon and Chad.

The Boko Haram crisis lingers on and is far from over, said UNHCR's Deputy High Commissioner Kelly T. Clements, while launching the funding appeal to donors in Niger's capital Niamey. The world should not forget the victims of this deadly conflict, especially as there appears to be little hope for a return to peace and stability in the near future.

Nigerian refugees continue to arrive in very remote and impoverished communities in neighbouring countries. Since it started in 2013, the Boko Haram conflict has internally displaced another 2.4 million people in northeast Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger. (KUNA)

Attack on ex-Kenyan VP: Former Kenyan Vice-President Kalonzo Musyoka said Wednesday gunshots and a grenade were fired at his home in what he called "an assassination attempt," as a government shutdown of three major TV stations entered its second day.

Musyoka told The Associated Press by phone the attack occurred hours after his police security was withdrawn and he was blocked from attending

ing a mock inauguration of opposition leader Raila Odinga on Tuesday in protest of President Uhuru Kenyatta's new term after months of deadly election turmoil.

Police Spokesman Charles Owino Owino confirmed that a stun grenade was hurled at Musyoka's home in the leafy Karen suburbs and two shots fired from a rifle. (AP)

Guinea names new PM: Guinea-Bissau's President Jose Mario Vaz named a new prime minister late Tuesday, appointing **Augusto Arturo Da Silva** by decree after the previous PM resigned in a bid to end a political crisis.

The new prime minister's first job will be to organise fresh parliamentary elections in the coming months.

The impoverished West African nation has been in the throes of a power struggle since August 2015, when Vaz sacked then prime minister Domingos Simoes Pereira. (AFP)



Da Silva

Musyoka

Dozens killed in Nigeria: Nigeria's military has killed at least 35 people in air raids during attempts to combat growing violence between farmers and herdsmen, Amnesty International said Tuesday.

Thousands of people have been displaced and at least 168 killed since the beginning of the year as farmers and nomadic herdsmen fight over land in five states, the human rights group said. Nigeria's military response has not curbed the fighting and further threatens the communities it is trying to protect, the new report said.

"Launching air raids is not a legitimate law enforcement method by anyone's standard. Such reckless use of deadly force is unlawful, outrageous and lays bare the Nigerian military's shocking disregard for the lives of those it supposedly exists to protect," said Amnesty International's Nigeria Director Osai Ojigho. "The government must overturn its response to these deadly clashes to avoid this crisis getting out of control." (AP)

UN condemns violence: The UN Security Council condemned ongoing violence and instability in Central African Republic on Tuesday in a resolution extending an arms embargo on the country and sanctions on individuals and entities for a year.

The resolution adopted unanimously by the council also condemns acts of incitement to violence that undermine peace, especially "on an ethnic or religious basis," and says for the first time that those responsible could face sanctions. (AP)

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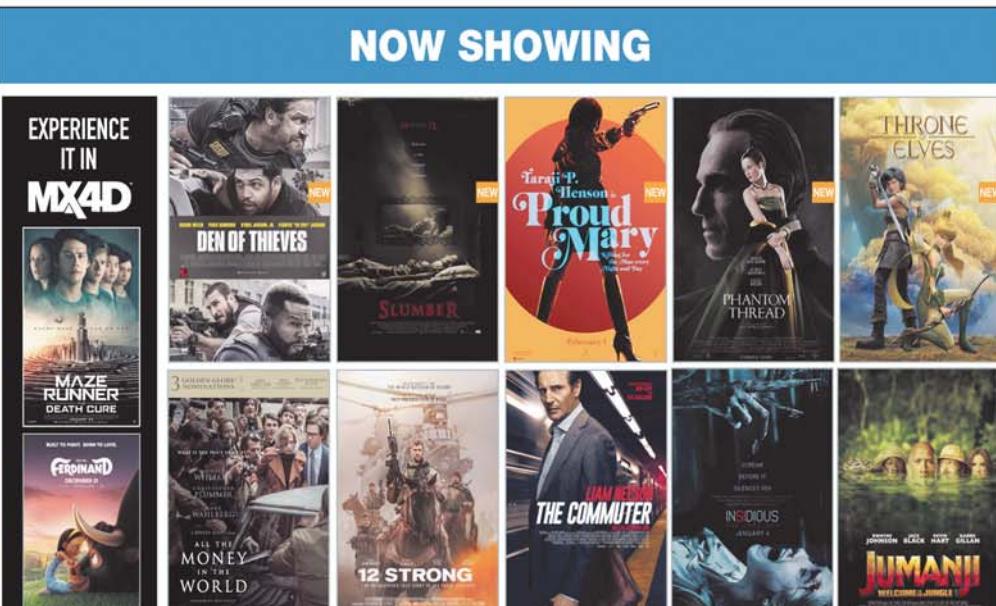
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World News Roundup



The Statue of Liberty is backdropped by a supermoon on Jan 31, 2018, seen from the Brooklyn borough of New York. (Inset): An Indonesian woman uses a telescope to view the moon during a lunar eclipse taking place during the 'super blue blood Moon' phenomenon in Jakarta. (AP/AFP)



Psychology

Response compatibility

Best friends brains light up same way

PARIS, Jan 31, (AFP): Dating sites would be well-advised to add "brain activity" as a compatibility criterion, according to a study released Tuesday showing that close friends have eerily comparable neural responses to life experiences.

"Our results suggest that friends process the world around them in exceptionally similar ways," said lead author Carolyn Parkinson, director of the Computational Social Neuroscience Lab at the University of California in Los Angeles.

Using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to compare which regions of the brain lit up as 42 volunteers watched short clips from news reports, music videos, comedy skits and documentaries, researchers were able to identify who among them were friends.

The closer the relationship, the more alike the neural patterns in parts of the brain governing emotional response, high-level reasoning, and the capacity to focus one's attention.

"Friends had the most similar neural activity patterns, followed by friends-of-friends," the authors said in a statement. "You can predict who people are friends with just by looking at how their brains respond to the video clips."

Video

The 14 brief excerpts included journalists debating whether then US president Barack Obama should use humour in his speeches; a sentimental music video about a social outcast with a facial deformity; a documentary about baby sloths in Costa Rica; and scenes from a gay wedding.

Scientists long ago understood that "birds of a feather flock together" when it comes to human social networks, with people attracted more easily to those of the same age, physical appearance and ethnic background, as well as other demographic categories. This tendency extends to social networks too, according to the study, published in the journal *Nature Communications*.

From an Darwinian perspective, evolutionary psychologists argue, the "like-with-like" principle favour social cohesion, empathy and frictionless collective action.

The relationships we forge with individuals who are clearly different from us — not of our "tribe" — tend to be practical, task-oriented and short-lived, research has shown.

But seeking out peers from the same pod has a downside that is amplified in the digital age, said senior author Thalia Wheatley, a professor of psychology and brain science at Dartmouth University in Massachusetts.

"The cost of surrounding ourselves with only like-minded people is the creation of echo-chambers and polarisation," she told AFP.

"This can be exacerbated by online communities that offer a constant diet of information that only confirms what people already believe."

One question not answered by the study is whether we naturally gravitate toward people who see the world the same way we do, or whether similarity — including the way our brains light up — springs from shared experience.

Most likely, it is a combination of the two.

"We are a social species and live our lives connected to everybody else," said Wheatley.

"If we want to understand how the human brain works, then we need to understand how brains work in combination — how minds shape each other."



Handout photo released by the Peruvian Air Force showing an object that descended on Jan 27, 2018 from the upper atmosphere engulfed with flames near the Larancanhuani community, in the Andean region of Puno, Peru. Peruvian peasants who found parts of an aerospace satellite which fell on an Andean community in southeastern Peru, informed the Peruvian Air Force on Jan 30, 2018. (AFP)



Musk



Abbott

Discovery

SpaceX wants \$5M more: SpaceX is seeking up to \$5 million more in new state funding to build a commercial spaceport in Texas, a high-profile project that's behind schedule after breaking ground in 2014.

SpaceX is seeking the money to help build infrastructure related to the launch facility at Boca Chica beach outside Brownsville, the Austin American-Statesman reported.

The Cameron County Spaceport Development Corp. recently applied for the \$5 million at the request of SpaceX, according to county Judge Eddie Trevino Jr. The new money for the project would come from the Spaceport Trust Fund, a state economic development fund.

The application was due last month. Gov. Greg Abbott's economic development and tourism division is currently considering the application, said a spokeswoman for the governor.

About \$15.3 million in state funding has already been set aside for the planned spaceport, but less than \$3 million has been used so far. SpaceX has also returned a small portion of the funds pledged from the state's jobs-focused Texas Enterprise Fund because the company fell short of hiring goals as the project couldn't keep pace with its original timetable.

The California-based company was founded by billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk with the goal of reducing the cost of space travel and eventually facilitating the colonization of Mars.

Musk initially said that SpaceX will invest \$100 million at the site, predicting it could send up rockets by late 2016, however that date has since been pushed to at least late 2018. (AP)

HK bans ivory sale: Hong Kong lawmakers have given final approval to a government proposal banning local ivory trading in the Chinese territory by 2021.

Lawmakers voted Wednesday in favor of amending the existing law to outlaw sales of ivory in Hong Kong, which researchers say is the world's biggest retail

Space

Celestial show 1st in 35 years 'Super blue blood Moon' delights

LOS ANGELES, Jan 31, (Agencies):

Stargazers across large swathes of the globe -- from the streets of Los Angeles to the slopes of a smouldering Philippine volcano -- had the chance to witness a rare "super blue blood Moon" Wednesday, when Earth's shadow bathed our satellite in a coppery hue.

The celestial show is the result of the Sun, Earth, and Moon lining up perfectly for a lunar eclipse just as the Moon is near its closest orbit point to Earth, making it appear "super" large.

It is the second full Moon within the same month, a phenomenon called a "blue" Moon which has nothing to do with its color.

The "blood" in the name comes from the reddish brown color the Moon takes on when Earth enters between it and the sun, cutting off the light rays that usually brighten the lunar surface.

The eclipse began around 3:45 am (1145 GMT), as a black shadow began to devour one corner of the gray-white Moon.

An hour later, the lunar surface was plunged into darkness, known as totality.

Then, rusty tones began to sheath the Moon, reflecting the light of all the sunrises and sunsets on Earth at the same moment.

There were gasps of delight at that moment in a school in the Philippines town on Guinobatan where some of the 90,000 people who have fled the erupting Mount Mayon volcano were sheltering.

There they were treated to a double-spectacle -- a supermoon eclipse rising over a mountain spewing ash and lava.

"It's huge and bright. It's exciting to see. God created this beautiful moon and the volcano," farmer Jose Alm-

esolano, 75, told AFP.

On the other side of the Pacific thousands were gathering at Los Angeles' Griffith Observatory, which opened its doors at 3:30 am (1130 GMT) to a crowd expected to reach 2,000.

Some had waited in line since 10:00 pm the night before, hoping for a choice viewing spot, many science buffs bringing their own telescopes to set up on the lawn.

The extreme east of Africa, the Middle East and Asia, Russia, Australia and New Zealand could enjoy the spectacle on Wednesday night, weather depending, as the Moon rises there.

People in Hawaii, Australia and eastern Asia should be able to follow the full eclipse from beginning to end, said NASA.

Show

But most of South America, Africa and Europe, where the alignment occurs in the middle of the day, will miss out on the show.

In the Indonesian capital Jakarta, several thousand people lined up at the planetarium to catch a glimpse of the rare event on one of its telescopes.

"I was watching the news on TV and then came here immediately," Yami, who like many Indonesians goes by one name, told local media.

In Nepal, where the super moon was just visible in the hazy polluted night sky over Kathmandu, the celestial phenomenon was greeted with more caution as an ominous sign.

Local newspapers there had printed warnings telling citizens not to eat, drink, sleep or even go to the toilet during the lunar eclipse, citing Hindu customs.

The last "super blue blood Moon" occurred on Dec 30, 1982, when it was

seen in Europe, Africa and western Asia.

For North America, the last time was in 1866.

This time around, viewing will be a challenge for those on the US East Coast. The eclipse begins just as the Moon is setting in the west and the sun is rising in the east.

Moon-watching parties for the one-hour-16-minute eclipse were advertised up and down the US West Coast. But people outside the path of totality, or whose view was obstructed by cloudy weather, could follow the event live via NASA.gov.

If you miss this one, the next blue moon total lunar eclipse will happen on Dec 31, 2028, though it won't be quite as large since it will not be as close to Earth.

Another will occur on Jan 31, 2037. "The red color during a lunar eclipse is very distinctive and it's a rare treat to be able to see a blood red moon," said Brian Rachford, associate professor of physics at the Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

"One of the great things about a lunar eclipse is you also don't need any special equipment to see it. Anyone can go outside and look at the moon."

Scientists are keen to study the sharp, sudden drop in temperature at the lunar surface, as Earth's shadow blankets the moon. During the more than one hour of totality, the temperature will plunge 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 Celsius), said lunar scientist Noah Petro of Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland. He's deputy project scientist for NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter, circling the moon since 2009. His team is taking special precautions to keep the spacecraft warm during the eclipse.

ivory market. The proposal also includes significantly stiffer penalties for wildlife smuggling to deter black market sales.

Under the new law, the maximum sentence will increase to a 10 million Hong Kong dollar (\$1.3 million) fine or 10 years in prison, up from the current two years. Wildlife activists applauded the move,

even as Hong Kong moves more slowly than Beijing. Mainland China banned ivory sales at the start of the year after shutting all carving factories and shops last March. (AP)

Tensions rise amid drought:



This handout photo released by Greenpeace on Jan 30, 2018 and taken on Jan 23, 2018 shows Spanish actor Javier Bardem looking at chinstrap penguins while arriving at King George Island in the Antarctic to join Greenpeace ship the Arctic Sunrise in an expedition. (AFP)

South African city of Cape Town says there has been growing tension and one arrest at a source of natural spring water where residents have converged because of a severe drought.

Authorities say they might have to turn off most city taps in mid-April if residents don't save enough water, a scenario that has raised concerns about security.

The city says police and the military will help secure water collection sites if the tap closure occurs. (AP)

Truck damages Nazca lines: Peru's ancient Nazca lines were damaged when a driver accidentally plowed his cargo truck into the fragile archaeological site in the desert, officials said Tuesday.

The lines, considered a UNESCO World Heritage site, are enormous drawings of animals and plants etched in the ground some 2,000 years ago by a pre-Inca civilization. They are best seen from the sky.

The driver ignored warning signs as he entered the Nazca archaeological zone on Jan 27, the Ministry of Culture said in a statement.

The truck "left deep prints in an area approximately 100 meters long," damaging "parts of three straight lined geoglyphs," the statement read.

Security guards detained the driver and filed charges against him at the local police station, the statement added. (AFP)



Photos courtesy of Nuqat

Nuqat co-founders Hussa Al Humaidhi and Wakim Zeidan with Zain vice-chairman & Group CEO Bader Al Kharafi who delivered the keynote address at the forum.

SPECIAL REPORT

N Q A T

CONNECTING DOTS FOR AN ECOSYSTEM OF CREATIVITY ... EXPLORATION KEY



A panel discussion at the Nuqat forum on the role of

civil society organizations.

By Cinatra Fernandes

Arab Times Staff

Nuqat, the foremost organization for creative education in Kuwait today, held a special edition forum at the Jaber Al Ahmad Cultural Center on Jan 24-25. The Human Capital Forum highlighted the importance of investing in the creative economy with talks and discussions panels that brought together academics, investors, policy makers and the creative community, as well as revealing a new social index developed to provide various stakeholders in Kuwait with a common yardstick to quantify and measure social impact.

The non-profit organization was founded by Wakim Zeidan, Hussa Al Humaidhi, Sara Al Nafisi and Dana Al Hilal in 2009, and has since championed creative education. Over the past few years, Nuqat has been now working towards understanding and supporting the creative economy. Over the years, it has organized and developed workshops, seminars and cultural events for adults and children, and fostered open conversation and the promotion of new ideas through its flagship conference, that has over the last several years become one of the most highly awaited events in the cultural calendar, attracting participants not only from different strata of Kuwaiti society but across the region.

The first day of the forum included a keynote address by Bader Al-Kharafi, Vice-Chairman and Group CEO of Zain, who spoke about enabling a creative culture. He stated, "I believe that a successful business is all about creative teamwork. We believe that the employees are the ones who make the company succeed or fail." He also stressed that Kuwait must support women, saying, "Countries must support gender equality because it's not only the right, but also the smart thing to do".

Other lectures included one by Alexandre Fernandes, a Cultural Entrepreneur from Brazil, on 'Building Possible Tomorrows', another by Reem Khouri, CEO of Kaamen, titled 'From Personal to Organizational to Collective Impact' discussing how changes can happen when it starts at the individual level, and sharing her lessons on the importance of failure in the business world.

Visual artist Dr Munira Al Qadri, gave a lecture titled 'Petro-Historical Complex' on environmental issues and the well-known Swar Shuaib Show Host, Shuaib Rashed, was interviewed by Ali Khajah, on unconventional media as a promising industry. Two discussion panels on the topics of 'Laying down the Foundations for Creativity to Thrive' and 'Measuring The Intangible' were also held.

The second day of the forum was launched with a lecture from entrepreneur Mohammed Jaafar, CEO of Faith Capital, titled 'Small Means Big: Investing in SMEs'. He remarked, "Success depends on effort, will, taking risks, setting examples and treating people, in addition to developing the right plan and setting a target. It also comes from perseverance and endurance, as well as investing in the team, maintaining it, developing it and cooperating with it in a family atmosphere. The success of a company is in the hands of the whole team rather than the individual."

Other lectures included those by Interior Designer Farah Al Humaidhi titled 'Unlocking the Chain of Creative Production', Independent curator Munira Al Sayegh on 'The Emergence and Development of a Cultural Sub Current', as well as Rana Alkhalef, CoFounder of the Protégés, speaking on 'The Role of Values in the Process of Personal and Collective Development' and artist Manal Aldowayan touching on 'Imagining Our Cities Through Public Art', with Human Development Architect Eman Akbar Rafay discussing 'Creativity, the Cornerstone of Development'. The discussion panels of the second day focused on the role of civil society organizations, and critical content for

change.

In this interview conducted on the sidelines of the Human Capital Forum, two of the founders, Wakim Zeidan and Hussa Al Humaidhi, gave us an update on the organization, discussed pertinent issues of the creative economy in Kuwait, and provided us a glimpse of the road ahead.

Arab Times: The last time we spoke to Nuqat was right before your annual conference in 2016 on the topic of the Seventh Sense. What have you all been doing since then?

Hussa Al Humaidhi: First of all, as an organisation, it is always important to take a step back and reflect. After seven years, we needed to re-evaluate and re-invent what we were doing, in a way. The second thing we did was to look into the topic of the creative economy, understand how vastly important it is, research it and lay down the foundations clearly. The final one was the preparation for something coming up in 2019.

Wakim Zeidan: As an organisation, although we are based in Kuwait, our reach extends to the Arab world. So we are using this topic as a bridge to expand our presence as an organisation in different cities around the Arab world and at the same time as we are a community networking platform, we want to connect talents all around the region together.

AT: Can you tell us about the exploration sessions you've conducted last year?

WZ: After the 2016 conference we laid down a plan to visit as many cities as we can in the Arab World to start the conversation on the creative economy. The reason for this is that the creative economy as a concept is very abstract and there needs to be a better understanding of what it means and how we can make it happen.

The second reason is that most of the governments in the region now have new visions based on the knowledge economy and we believe that the creative economy builds on it. So each country can have its own knowledge base that is relevant to it, yet the only thing that can utilise this knowledge, give it meaning and diversify the economy is creativity and innovation. So, on a larger scale, we see the creative economy as connecting the dots between the different knowledge-based economies and what each one has to offer and try to collate all of that.

We aim to visit as many cities as we can, building up to 2019, where we can have a Nuqat Regional to wrap up the conversations we've had in one big programme that brings together all the people we've met in the exploration sessions, as well as the knowledge, the ideas, the discussions, the challenges, in order to formulate the way forward for the creative economy. We still don't know how it'll exactly shape up but that is in our nature, we make it happen as we progress.

So far, we have visited four cities of Manama, Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Doha, and conducted exploration sessions based on three topics of design education, architecture and urbanism, and funding the creative economy. These topics are being migrated across all cities so we have a report at the end that describes the understanding of each city under each topic.

As part of this tour, we held a special forum in Kuwait that also falls under that theme. Focussing on the human capital for Kuwait is a very specific topic that was derived from the exploration sessions we held in 2016 as part of the conference.

HH: Also, we know the importance of having this gathering and we did miss it in 2017. So creating a special edition two-day forum to bring the com-

munity back together and experience that vibe again while discussing substantial topics is why we've decided to do a forum in Kuwait and not just an exploration.

AT: I really like the term 'exploration sessions'. What discoveries have you made so far across cities?

WZ: Exploration is the main point. It is meant to be a research but we want to keep it open and not make it solely academic. For each topic in each city we let the invitees discuss the challenges, the opportunities that their city has under that topic and suggest possible solutions to those issues.

HH: What is important, and what we focussed a lot of attention on, was creating a safe space for people to express their thoughts. We were very intentional in bringing people from different sectors together that had perhaps never sat on one table and discussed a topic before openly. We create a safe space of expression that's also why we call it an exploration, there is a structure to it but there is also a free flow of conversation. It is a very human dialogue where real concerns and challenges are raised.

WZ: Individual inputs are kept private although we document everything and extract information that has been discussed to put it into a report that will be available for the public to look into in the near future.

AT: Were there any common challenges or overarching themes across the four cities?

HH: I think the key challenge is communication between different sectors. I think there is a big disconnect between the creative industries and the financial sector and even governmental, medical, and so on. I think this is a problem across all boards.

WZ: There was sometimes a disconnect even between academia and professionals. It was our intention to bring these people together. A lot of entities do roundtables but bring people from the same circle to talk about that topic. We did the complete opposite. We had a topic and brought relevant people from different sectors and different backgrounds, from universities, public sector, infrastructure, professionals, and so on. It was a good move because people from the private sector always had issues with the people working in the government sector. In many of the roundtables, once they conversed, we were able to establish empathy and they understood the challenges on each side. They decided to join hands in one way or another.

AT: Nuqat has always championed the philosophy of collaboration. Considering the political climate of the GCC today, was there any perceivable shift in terms of creative collaborating with other?

WZ: Quite to the contrary, there is a general sense of collaboration across most of the sectors, not just among the creatives, at least from our perspective.

HH: I think the political disconnect that is happening is very much political rather than social. I think that socially, people don't want any divide. So far, Kuwait's political position of being a neutral zone is also good to bring people together.

AT: Let's talk about the Human Capital Forum. Can you tell us a bit more about the theme and how it all came together?

HH: We did an exploration session in 2016 and one of them was on funding the creative economy. We brought in people from the financial sector, investments, entrepreneurs, angel investors, accelerators, incubators, and creative professionals, all on one table, to discuss why the money isn't going into the

Continued on Page 16



Photos courtesy of Nuqat

The Minister of Commerce & Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan at the Nuqat forum. Inset shows Sara Al-Nafisi, a co-founder of Nuqat

SPECIAL REPORT



At left Mohammed Jaafar, CEO of Faith Capital and designer Farah Al-Humaidhi (right)

Continued from Page 15

creative economy. Two issues were raised. Firstly, there isn't enough awareness about the importance of the creative industry, the opportunities it provides and how that could be the core of an economy that is based on creative knowledge. Secondly, financiers at the end of the day want to see numbers, so how can we quantify investments in innovations or ideas that create social change. While we know that creativity and innovation creates a social impact, how do we measure the returns?

These two topics were a base for us to create new projects and one of them was the forum and the second was an index that we are developing in this regard. The forum this year leaned a bit towards the financial, investment and governmental sectors but our creative professionals and those interested in creativity and inspiration are still the main target. We wanted to widen the scope and have a larger conversation.

When I mean investing, it is not just money but also investing time, and investing in education. It is really about putting the effort into it and looking at the human mind, as human capital because that's our asset. The human mind is the source of sustainability. You can pump oil and the reserves will keep decreasing but if you pump the mind, it will keep increasing. It is pure economics, investing in the human capital and how it will create an impact. It was a very heavy two-day programme of bringing together investors, researchers, writers, activists, designers, artists, entrepreneurs, TV hosts, cartoonists, musicians, policy makers, all under one roof to discuss a new future.

AT: How would you assess the current state of the creative economy of Kuwait?

WZ: Kuwait's creative economy is still at a nascent stage.

HH: It has dispersed components but it needs to come together as an ecosystem. There are many missing components. We do believe that Kuwait has a very creative energy. It is something that we can't really explain, it is something that you feel. Historically, Kuwait was built on entrepreneurship and creative and we were and hopefully will be a centre for the arts and culture and theatre and music. I think Kuwait is having a renaissance now.

AT: What are the factors that need to be involved in this renaissance?

WZ: Many have to be involved and there have to be certain functions that connect them together. Those functions range from putting in the right policies to the civil society playing its role to bring them together. Individuals have to be willing not just to aim to make money but on top of their profits, do something to serve the community at the same time.

HH: When you trickle it down, it is an invitation for each individual to look at what their passion is about. If you want to excel at something, you excel at what you're passionate about. The problem is that we have been packaged to work in a systemised economy and no one was able to explore what they are good at and excel in it. With the creative economy, will create the opportunities for each person to excel at what they are good at. When you do something you love you are happier and when you are happier you become more productive. We always encourage people to be curious and look for what you want to do and have the courage and confidence to do it.

AT: How do you define the creative economy? Are specific sectors involved?

HH: The creative industry is that which produces more of the cultural and creative, art and design content. It includes theatres, museums and cultural centres, advertising agencies, art studios, architecture, visual and performing arts.

The creative economy, on the other hand, is a system where the main resource depends on creativity whether you are creative as a doctor and you innovate in medicine, or you innovate as an engineer or even as a police officer. It is an economy dependant on a way of thinking other than a tangible resource. To have a creative economy your values need to be asserted and this

is also something we are addressing — in order for you to be creative you have to be empathetic. You have to understand the other, be accepting and open-minded.

AT: Can you tell us about the tool you are developing to measure the social impact of investing in the creative economy?

WZ: Out of the exploration session, there was an understanding that all investors need to measure creativity if they want to invest in it. Creativity, in itself, cannot be measured. So we decided to measure the elements that it affects. Creativity is closely related to any social development. If you look historically at many countries, those who had creativity and innovation at their core evolved positively. So we thought that this could be a way where we measured the healthiness of the creative economy and quantify returns.

Even if we have the tool, there needs to be an education for it. Company should be made aware that investing in the development of ideas that improve human creativity not only make them more profit but also have a social impact.

For the index currently now, we signed an agreement with an international consultant, Strategy& who have the expertise in developing indices and together we have developed the framework for it and now we are at a stage where we are defining the elements that creativity has an impact on. We held a session and brought in community members and different stakeholders, providing them metrics that we collated from indices that already existed around the world, which worked as a base for them to assess and to see what is missing and what we need to add to it so that the index is relevant to our society.

This process is ongoing and by December, hopefully, we will have the tool ready to be launched and the companies will be able to start measuring themselves on that index.

A lot of research has shown that companies who create products and services that have larger impact on society tend to sell and profit more. If we take the example of the mobile phone, it is an invention that sells many units but at the same time it has a huge social and empowering impact. It has helped people who live in remote areas have access to the world, it has helped decrease illiteracy and at the same time it has helped create new businesses built on mobile applications and numerous job opportunities. There needs to be that kind of thinking incorporated in all companies. Not just about having a Corporate Social Responsibility programme and giving money back but integrating the values within the company itself. Companies should cancel CSR and work to make themselves more relevant to society.

AT: Can you give me an example of one element or indicator?

WZ: One indicator could be as simple as research and development. Is the company really investing in R&D or is it just seeing what projects are there outside and migrating that to the market here. Another factor would be, training of employees and in the right direction. Is it investing in new ideas continuously and encouraging its staff to come up with new ideas?

HH: These are more internal elements but you also look at external things such as does a product solve one of the social indicators that we are looking to solve in a sustainable manner. So if we take the environment, did the company just organize a beach clean-up, as part of their CSR or did they create a product that encourages people to pick up their trash. Companies have to consider if they are changing behaviours, if they are being more sustainable with how they spend money. That would score higher than just a one-off event.

AT: What does 2018 hold for Nuqat?

WZ: We have started 2018 with the In.Dig.Go programme which is focused on creative and alternative education for children, in strategic partnership with Zain. The objective of the programme is to instill in children the four C's of Creativity, Communication, Critical Thinking and Collaboration. While they go to school and learn a specific content, we want to equip them to making use of that content or subjects in life. So the programme aims at

making use of their learning and complementing it by doing projects based on specific themes such as textile, furniture, film production and gardening. We hope to build a good case study based on the documentation and evaluations and reports so that the Ministry of Education can be receptive and try to integrate it into the private and public schools.

This programme has been designed as a collaboration between creative professionals and school teachers from the public and private sectors. It is a whole new dimension of collaboration that we hope we can progress forward to us developing the workforce and human capital of the future that is able to cope with its requirements by being innovative and good critical thinkers.

HH: As part of what we do when we say cultural development, we facilitate the environment for these things to happen. For the In.Dig.Go programme, under Maha El Essa, we have created a structure of how the content will be developed but we didn't develop it ourselves. We held workshops with school teachers and creative professionals to come up with the content together. I think for us it is the first of a kind, the activities and fun are conducted by professionals and teachers assist in the background.

WZ: Aside from that we plan to continue visiting other cities, and aim to complete the GCC as soon as possible and move into the MENA region, with multiple cities in KSA, and move to Amman, Beirut, Cairo and hopefully Marrakesh and Tunis.

AT: What is the secret behind Nuqat's ability to expand and scale up so tremendously and consistently while many other similar initiatives have been less successful?

WZ: It is not always easy. We have moments when we quit, give up. It's normal. We have had so many sit downs where we question why we are doing this.

Asking why continuously when we're so exhausted and tired is very important. We have been persistent and with every questioning of why something is being done, we get a different answer and that is what keeps it going. There is also the factor of responsibility. Every time you do something, it sets a benchmark and people are expecting you to outperform yourself. This really adds to the pressure.

HH: The constant feedback of the people who come to Nuqat is crucial, everyone is genuine about how they feel, how it affected them or how it brought people together. Those genuine responses feed us to keep going. Another important factor for us as a team is that we really communicate openly with each other and we don't take things personally. Whenever we are down, we are down together and we talk about it and when we celebrate, we celebrate together. It is this idea of being open whether through communication or emotionally, and to be able to have that internally as a team really reflects on the work that you provide. So we provide a healthy space for each other.

WZ: We focus a lot on content and that is the most critical element. We don't just tackle it for the people, we tackle it on a personal level. It is important for us too. It is not just about bringing in a topic that everybody is clueless about just because it looks nice. It is something that you are really facing and you want to solve it together.

HH: I think it is content, the team, the community and the fact that we always respond to the feedback we get. At the end of the day we are not doing this for ourselves. In 2011, we were criticized for having the talks in English and we responded to that and shifted our talks to Arabic. Every year, we send out feedback form and also pay attention to any responses we get on social media. We listen and take them into consideration. It is important to know what the user wants, how can we provide that, accept criticism to help us build ourselves.

WZ: All of this, without compromising on quality or content. We've had fights with others who have tried to suppress the content and we just refused to give in because having an open conversation is as important as anything else.

People & Places

Film

'Iconic movie'

Panther needs African accent, says Boseman

LOS ANGELES, Jan 31, (Agencies): "Black Panther" star Chadwick Boseman revealed Tuesday doubters had tried to convince him not to give the superhero an African accent — and how proud he was to prove them wrong.

The 41-year-old American stars in the titular role in the 18th movie in the Marvel Cinematic Universe — the first black superhero to get his own standalone movie.

"There was a time period where people would ask me questions about whether or not an audience could sit through a movie with a lead character that spoke with that accent," Boseman said of the east African inflection he gives the superhero — alias King T'Challa.

"I became adamant about the fact that it's not true," he added, stressing that none of the naysayers had come from Marvel itself.

The intonations and melodies inside an African accent are just as classical as a British one or a European one."

Boseman was speaking at a Beverly Hills news conference along with director Ryan Coogler, costars Michael B. Jordan, Lupita Nyong'o and Danai Gurira and the rest of the cast the morning after Monday's glittering Hollywood premiere.

The actor got his break after a decade as an obscure television and indie film actor when Marvel came calling in 2014 with a lucrative five-picture deal to play Black Panther.

Real

His appearance in "Captain America: Civil War" (2016) brought Boseman his first taste of real fame and his celebrity looks set to skyrocket when "Black Panther" opens on Feb 16, followed in May by "Avengers: Infinity War."

T'Challa, king and protector of the technologically advanced fictional African nation of Wakanda, has been characterized as the first black superhero, which is partly true.

Around 30 black characters have donned the lyrca for the big screen since the early 1990s, including Marvel's Falcon (Anthony Mackie since 2014), Wesley Snipes' titular vampire hunter in "Blade" (1998) and Halle Berry's Kenyan princess Storm in four "X-men" movies.

The Wakandan royal can claim to be the first black superhero to land a standalone movie in the MCU and the first in mainstream American comics, having been featured in "The Fantastic Four" in 1966.

Critical and celebrity reactions to "Black Panther" after Monday's premiere were about as good as could be expected, with reviewers hailing the movie as "iconic" and "astonishing."

Donald Glover, who is due to star as Lando Calrissian in the upcoming "Solo: A Star Wars Story," called it "beautiful" while "Ant-Man" director Peyton Reed said it was "soulful, thoughtful and of the moment."

Marvel Studios president Kevin Feige, who produces every MCU movie, agreed that the messages of the movie — which posits Wakanda taking in refugees and extending its culture and technology to poorer nations — were particularly topical, but added that most of the script was written 18 months ago.

Coogler and the producers came in for particular praise at the news conference for their decision to feature a clique of powerful female characters — dubbed "the women of Wakanda" front and center.

"I was so pleased that this story... that it supported that. In African culture, they feel as if there is no king without a queen and this story, it highlights the queen, the warrior, the general, the young sister," said Angela Bassett, who plays T'Challa's mother Ramonda.

"I was so proud to have my daughter and my son there last night, because in their faces, in their spirit, they were feeling themselves. They stood taller after last night."

Gurira ("The Walking Dead") spoke of her trepidation over having her head shaved to play Okoye, the head of Wakanda's Dora Milaje special forces, but how she saw it as "subversive in the right way."

"In theory, it sounded amazing, and then the day came... It happened. Then you walk into the restroom to wash your hands, look up like, 'What the?'

"It took a few days... Then the pride started to grow, there's pride around it, and the embracing of this symbol of power and these women."

Original

As people gear up for the "Black Panther" movie, Ta-Nehisi Coates wants them to check out the original source, Marvel's Black Panther comic book, where he's booting up a massive outer space adventure for the king of Wakanda.

The award-winning author and journalist, in an interview with The Associated Press, predicted that the Black Panther movie would "be the best Marvel film so far."

"(But) if people want something that they can be deeply involved in, if people want something that raises questions that extend out of the comic book and into the real world, if people want to see some amazing high-tech (stuff), this is a good jumping on point," said Coates, now in his second year writing the adventures one of the first comic books heroes of color for Marvel.

The Black Panther is the alter-ego of T'Challa, the leader of Wakanda, a technologically-advanced (but make-believe) African country. A longtime ally and one-time member of both the Avengers and the Fantastic Four, T'Challa uses his wealth, inventions, and country's resources to battle against evil from both inside and outside his country's borders while serving as the head of the government.

The character got a boost as a supporting character in 2016's "Captain America: Civil War." The much-hyped movie "Black Panther," starring Chadwick Boseman as the eponymous superhero, opens on Feb 16, picking up the adventures of the African king and superhero.

Coates said he's seen parts of next month's movie helmed by "Fruitvale Station" and "Creed" director Ryan Coogler, and calls the director a "superior filmmaker" and a "once-in-a-generation talent."

"Black people have not really had avatars out there like that they can identify with, and Panther is the biggest one right now," Coates said. "I think what Ryan is going to do in terms of how this is going to look is going to blow people away... It feels like thematically a natural tie."



This image released by Sony Pictures Classics shows Daniela Vega in a scene from, 'A Fantastic Woman.' (AP)



Daniel Kaluuya attends the world premiere of Marvel Studios' 'Black Panther,' on Jan 29, 2018 in Hollywood, California. (AFP)



Salling Timberlake

Variety

LOS ANGELES: Mark Salling, who played bad-boy Noah "Puck" Puckerman in the hit musical-comedy "Glee," died of an apparent suicide Tuesday, weeks after pleading guilty to possessing child pornography. He was 35.

Salling pleaded guilty in December after authorities said a search of his computer and a thumb drive found more than 50,000 images of child porn. He was scheduled to be sentenced March 7, and prosecutors planned to ask a judge to send him to prison for four to seven years. (AP)

NEW YORK: A watchdog group is politely pleading with Justin Timberlake to keep his Super Bowl halftime show "safe for the children watching."

In an open letter to the entertainer issued on Tuesday, the Parents Television Council hopes there isn't a repeat of what happened in 2004 when Timberlake ripped Janet Jackson's costume.

The group writes that it hopes Timberlake will keep the halftime show "friendly and safe" for the children watching, especially since some will want to emulate the singer. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Word on the celebrity property gossip street, via always plugged-in real estate yenta Yolanda Yakketayak, is that Miley Cyrus has made a sureriptious, not-yet-completed off-market deal to sell her little-used equestrian estate in Hidden Hills, Calif., to an unknown buyer for just about \$5 million. The Disney child star-turned-pop phenom, purchased the more than five-acre spread not quite three years ago for \$5 million.

A tree-lined driveway makes a long curve up from the guard-gated street to the two-story, brick-

Film

Mirren talks 'Winchester' film

A star is born in 'Fantastic Woman'

By Lindsey Bahr

The lead character of Sebastian Lelio's film "A Fantastic Woman" is named Marina. She is a singer and a waitress. She has a boyfriend, Orlando, who is much older than her, but that matters little. They are clearly smitten with one another and in that post-honeymoon phase of the relationship where things are still passionate, but also calm and comforting. They're planning a trip together. She's moving in. Life is moving along nicely it seems.

Marina is also a transgender woman, portrayed by a transgender actress, Daniela Vega. If you've heard of "A Fantastic Woman," which recently picked up a best foreign language film nomination for Chile, you've likely heard this fact. It might even be the only thing you know about it.

What's astonishing about the actual experience of watching "A Fantastic Woman" is how small of a "thing" it really is, and in that way perhaps one of the truest expressions of modern transgender life that we've ever seen in a fictional film. Marina is just Marina. She has a delicate beauty, and a cool choppy Alexa Chung-like haircut and style. On stage, she's performs with a sultry confidence. Off stage, she's quieter and almost reserved, but very present, especially around Orlando (Francisco Reyes).

But one night, Orlando dies suddenly and Marina's tranquility is thrown into a tailspin — not just from the death of her love, but from all the unnecessary and often ridiculous complications, some bureaucratic, some purely emotional, that emerge and seem to stem from the fact that she is transgender.

At the hospital where Orlando dies, the fact that her legal name is still her birth name and not Marina becomes an issue with a cop (who an uncomfortable doctor calls when she leaves the scene after he's pronounced dead). A social worker, too, becomes obsessed with checking on Marina, which she continues to explain is just a matter of procedure and to ensure that she was not abused or a worker, but which feels nothing but invasive and inappropriate from Marina's perspective. Orlando's family, too, is unconsciously cruel to her — save for his brother, Gabo (Luis Gnecco), who seems to be the only person in the film empathetic to the fact that Marina is just a human who has lost a loved one.

Every day is filled with the ever-present threat that someone is going to be uncomfortable with her. Marina is gracious and accommodating almost to a fault, both to the insidiously subtle kinds of judgment and the more outward violence and hatred. Orlando's ex-wife tells her in no uncertain terms that she is not welcome at the funeral or wake. His grief stricken son is disgusted by her and makes no attempt to hide. And all Marina wants to do is grieve in her own way.

Lelio's film occasionally delves into some magical realism as Marina struggles to maintain her composure amid such callous inhumanity from so many people, which is a beautiful if jarring disruption in a film that's otherwise so committed to reality.

It's Vega's extraordinary performance, full of grace and depth,

that keeps "A Fantastic Woman" in check from becoming something either too campy or too sanctimonious. It's one that has the power to make an audience really understand and internalize why it is an act of bravery to simply live life as herself, and perhaps even change some minds in the process.

"A Fantastic Woman," a Sony Pictures Classics release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America for "language, sexual content, nudity and a disturbing assault." Running time: 104 minutes. Three stars out of four.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: Helen Mirren says her new film "Winchester" isn't a horror flick, but rather a ghost story with foreign roots and a distinct American element — the psychological impact of gun deaths.

Mirren plays the real-life Sarah Winchester, a 19th-century heiress who inherited a massive fortune from her husband's creation of the Winchester repeating rifle shortly after the Civil War. In the film, Winchester believes she is haunted by those killed by the firearm, which allowed for more rapid firing than previous rifles.

"It's a ghost story, hopefully in the tradition, the very grand tradition, of Japanese ghost stories, ghost films," Mirren said in a recent interview. "You know, the Japanese love ghost stories and have great belief in the power of the ancestor spirits, of the ancestors, at many cultures do."

Part of the film was shot at Winchester's mansion in San Jose, California, where she moved after the death of her husband in 1881. Now known as the "Winchester Mystery House," it is a popular tourist attraction and has more than 160 rooms, 10 thousand windows, two thousand doors and forty staircases.

According to the lore around Winchester's life, she ordered constant construction on the home to try to confuse the ghosts she believed were haunting her.

"There are many theories why she did this," Mirren said. "And one of the theories that we explore in the film. She was trying to placate the ghosts of the people who'd been killed by the Winchester rifle. She felt their deaths very strongly. She felt responsible. She felt the weight of their deaths upon them. And she was trying, in her own way, to placate their spirits."

Despite "Winchester's" themes, Mirren, 72, said the film isn't trying to make any broad statements about gun ownership in America.

"What I like about it and I think... about America is that it doesn't deal with whether you can carry guns or not. That's kind of not the issue," she said. "The issue is more putting the question mark or the weight of moral decision upon the people who make a fortune from making arms — whether they're guns, bombs, grenades... or whatever it is. It puts a moral decision upon the people who make huge fortunes from making and then I would say the armaments dealers in the world I would like to see it... I see it personally in a much more global way." (AP)

whose claims against News Group Newspapers were settled Tuesday at the High Court in London.

Lawyer Sara Mansoori said Tennant was "outraged and shocked by the invasions of his privacy by individuals working for

Tennant is one of six people

Chopin collection set to go 'online'

WARSAW, Jan 31, (AFP): Poland's Fryderyk Chopin Institute (NIFC) on Tuesday said it would make its entire collection devoted to the 19th-century composer available online for by 2020.

"Chopin will be the first great composer to have all of his musical scores digitised" and openly accessible by all, NIFC deputy director Maciej Janicki told reporters.

Nearly 40,000 Chopin items from the UNESCO world heritage collection will be put online, Janicki added.

or acting on behalf of the News of the World."

News Group lawyer Ben Silverstone said the firm offered sincere apologies. It is paying the claimants' legal costs and undisclosed damages. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Emily Blunt is set to star alongside Dwayne Johnson in Disney's "Jungle Cruise," sources tell Variety.

Jaume Collet-Serra is on board to direct the film based on the Walt Disney World ride. Oscar nominee Michael Green ("Logan") penned the most recent draft of the script. He rewrote a screenplay by J.D. Payne and Patrick McKay. The film is based on the classic theme park attraction, which operates in several Disney Parks across the globe and takes guests on a guided tour through the rivers of the world.

Disney sees the film as another major franchise in the vein of its billion-dollar "Pirates of the Caribbean" series and Johnson and Collet-Serra have found time in the stars busy schedule to map out how they see this film going. (RTRS)



In this file photo taken on Jan 27, 2006 French conductor Francois-Xavier Roth acknowledges the audience after performing 'Les siecles' (The Centuries) at the Cite Internationale des Congres in Nantes, western France. Roth was named 'artist associate' at the Philharmonie de Paris it was announced on Jan 29, 2018. (AFP)



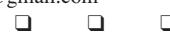
Indian Cultural Society team met the new Ambassador of India to Kuwait HE Jeeva Sagar and welcomed him to Kuwait and invited him to grace ICS event Amit Kumar Live Feb 2 at the American International School Hawally.



ONCP Kuwait National committee remembered Mahatma Gandhi on his 70th death anniversary. ONCP National President Babu Francis, National Executive members Sridharan Subbairaj, Pranesh Kumar and other members in paying homage to the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi led a non-violent mass freedom movement in India and his words continue to inspire all Indians.

click

Drinking problem?: Friends of Bill W. are available to help. Totally confidential. Email: rhosecretary@gmail.com



Narcotics Anonymous: NA can help with addiction problems. Totally confidential: 94087800 English/Arabic.



Cancer online support group: If you are Cancer patient or family member fighting with this deadly disease, come join our online support group. Best way of dealing with this disease is providing support and share our experience with each other. There are lots of things which even doctors can't tell so be member of this website and start sharing your experiences which may help others. October is recognized as National Breast Cancer Awareness Month (NBCAM). The primary purpose is to promote self examination and screening mammography as the most effective way to save lives by detecting breast cancer at early stage. For more information visit: <http://fightingwithcancer.webs.com/>

Latest

Feb 7

TIES Third Culture Kids: If you or someone you know has spent a significant part of his developmental years outside his parent's culture, or if his parents are from two different cultures, he is a Third Culture Kid. Join Dr Teresa Lesher to explore some of the advantages and disadvantages of being a TCK and strategies for coping with its challenges. Discussion follows a 30-minute presentation on

Wednesday, February 7 @ 7pm
Villa No 67, Street 413, Block 4, Shuhada Area, Kuwait

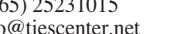
Phone: +(965) 25231015
Email: info@tiescenter.net



TIES Chai Dhuha: Experience a Kuwaiti tradition with a cup of tea (chai) in early morning (duhuha). Feel at home among Kuwaiti ladies and seasoned expats while sharing what's on your mind.

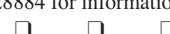
Wednesday, February 7 @ 10am (ladies only)
Villa No 67, Street 413, Block 4, Shuhada Area, Kuwait

Phone: +(965) 25231015
Email: info@tiescenter.net



General

Q8Ball Season 13: Q8Ball is beginning our 13th season with Boys U13 (ages 10-13) and U17 (ages 14-17). We train three times a week and play regular games throughout the year with schools and clubs. In June 2018, we plan to travel for camp and tournaments in the US. Contact Coach T 97128884 for information.



Invitation to Grand Mosque: The Visits Department is pleased to invite you to visit the Grand Mosque, which is one of Kuwait's most treasured religious and cultural landmarks to discover the beauty of Islamic arts and architecture. Free guided tours are available all year round on official working days between (9-11 am) and

Indian Cultural Society Presents
Yaad Aa Rahi Hai
FRIDAY 02 FEB
with the son of Legendary **Kishor Kumar** (playback singer, actor, director, and music director)
Amit Kumar
Accompanied By: **SARGAM STAR LIVE BAND**
SAYRA KHAN(Co Singer) & RAJEEV MALHOTRA(Comedian)
Anchor: A. A. KHAN
AIS Auditorium, Maidan Hawally, Kuwait
66550065, 99709495, 97260048
WWW.ICS.KUWAIT.ORG

A flyer of the event

(5-7 pm), within a special tour program designed to cater to the needs of different age groups. The program is as follows:

Reception; Auditorium show; (according to age group); Touring the Mosque; Q & A; Art workshops; (according to age group – between 5 and 18 years old); Snack break; Distribution of the Grand Mosque publications and souvenirs; End of tour.

According to these age groups:

Age group: 5 to 9 years old: Morning: 60 visitors max; Evening: 20; 10 to 15 years: Morning: 100 visitors max; Evening: 45; 16 and above: Morning: 140 visitors max; Evening: 105;

Tour language: Arabic-English-French; Arabic (English upon prior request); Arabic-English-French; Arabic (English upon prior request); Arabic-English-French; Arabic (English upon prior request)

Rules and Regulations:

■ Please arrive in time for your visit.

■ All visitors are kindly required to abide by the mosque's dress code. Male visitors should wear long pants. Shorts and sleeveless shirts are not allowed. Female visitors: should wear head cover and long loose clothing (available at the mosque).

■ Foods and drinks are not allowed inside the prayer halls.

■ For school visits, teachers are responsible for their students and are required to cooperate with the staff members of the Grand Mosque.

■ Photography is allowed inside the Grand Mosque (please note that disrespectful poses are strictly prohibited).

If you would like to book a tour, please contact us:

Tel: 22980813/ 22980815/ 22980812
Email: gmvvisits@gmail.com
Fax: 22473708

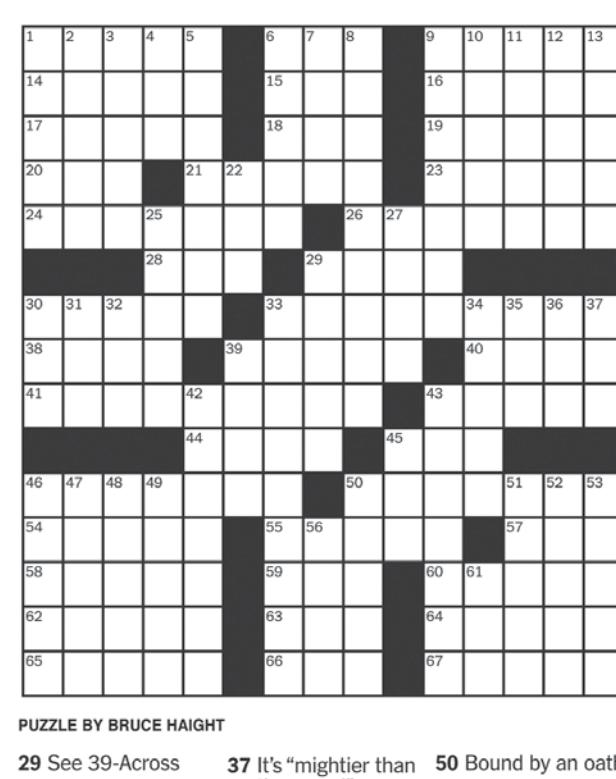


Share your story with Amricani: Do you or

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Puff ___ (snake)
6 Bit of Brylcreem, say
9 Following
14 Prince Harry's mum
15 It hatches from a big egg
16 Unmanned aircraft
17 With 3-Down, useful
18 Keane, "The Family Circus" cartoonist
19 With 11-Down, snobbish
20 California's old Fort ___
21 Soupy "Oliver Twist" fare
23 Cosmetician Lauder
24 Award named for the winningest pitcher of all time
26 Ones sacrificing for a cause
28 Santa ___ winds
29 Firm (up), as muscles
30 Long, hard journeys
33 Old coupon for the needy
38 Greeting from a parade float
39 With 29-Down, sophisticated
40 Listening device on a narc
41 Realtor's showing
43 Murdered
44 Grand Ole ___
45 Put on, as a TV show
46 Patron of France
50 Produces a large body of work?
54 "It is my desire ___"
55 Word that can follow sea, solar or staying
57 "How relaxing!"

DOWN
1 ___ committee
2 Book that might require a key to open
3 See 17-Across
4 Finish
5 Sci-fi weapons
6 Fix, as software
7 French female friend
8 Symbol of Teddy Roosevelt's political party
9 Sticks (to)
10 Ice, as a cake
11 See 19-Across
12 Go inside
13 Spanish kings
22 Genetic initials
25 Like some wooden buckets
27 Roddick or Rooney



PUZZLE BY BRUCE HAIGHT

29 See 39-Across
30 What it takes to tango
31 Genre for Big Sean or Biggie Smalls
32 She raised Cain
33 Like most manual transmissions in the 1970s and '80s
34 Spin, as a baton
35 First-___ kit
36 CT scan alternative
37 It's "mightier than the sword"
39 Arizona tribe
42 ___ list (tasks for one's spouse)
43 Active during the daytime
45 Card that beats a king
46 River deposits
47 ___ Birch, "American Beauty" actress
48 See 58-Across
49 Fencing blades
50 Bound by an oath
51 See 60-Across
52 Ping-Pong surface
53 More timid
56 Grotesque folklore figure
61 Org. for docs

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

H	I	G	S	O	R	E	S	P	S	A	T
Y	E	R	Y	O	U	D	O	N	E	A	W
H	E	E	F	R	E	E	Z	E	W	E	K
U	N	S	E	A	T	Y	I	P	P	E	
S	O	T	N	C	E	P	A	R	T	O	N
A	L	F	R	E	D	I	G	E	S	T	E
P	O	I	N	T	S	A	T	E	D	A	T
G	E	T	B	U	S	J	A	M	B		
T	U	R	E	E	N	M	O	V	I		
G	I	R	L	H	O	S	E	P	L		
O	R	E	A	C	R	O	B	A	T		
V	E	S	T	R	O	N	W	E	A	S	E



Scratch pad

Conceptis Sudoku

The grid must be so completed that every row, column and 3x3 box has every digit from 1 to 9 inclusive

By Dave Green

2	7			8	6						
5		7	9	1		8					
		2			3						
	5		1			8					
6					2						
3			6		1						
4			7								
2	3	8	6		7						
6	4				1	2					

Difficulty Level ★

Answer to yesterday's puzzle

7	6	8	2	4	9	1	3	5
5	1	2	6	8	3	9	4	7
4	3	9	5	7	1	8	2	6
6	8	1	7	3	5	2	9	4
9	2	5	4	1	8	6	7	3
3	4	7	9	2	6	5	1	8
8	9	3	1	6	7	4	5	2
1	7	4	8	5	2	3	6	9
2	5	6	3	9	4	7	8	1

Difficulty Level ★★★★

Challenger

By Liane M. Moreira

DIRECTIONS:

- Fill each square with a number, one through nine.
- Horizontal squares should add to totals on right.
- Vertical squares should add to totals on bottom.
- Diagonal squares through center should add to total in upper and lower right.

THERE MAY BE MORE THAN ONE SOLUTION.

Today's Challenge
Time 3 Minutes
26 Seconds
Your Working Time ___ Minutes ___ Seconds

2	3	5	9	19
5	6	9	9	29
2	9	3	9	23
9	3	2	8	22
18	21	19	35	19

Word by Word

● A lady went to a local private hospital to have some routine medical tests. She was shocked when, after a quick examination, the doctor told her she needs two surgeries for two different medical conditions. When the lady asked if the doctor was sure that surgery is necessary, the doctor said yes, but not to worry because these conditions are very common. The lady asked the doctor to write down the names of the medical procedures, and then the doctor ushered her to the door, telling her to schedule the surgeries soon.

Still in shock, the lady researched the conditions she was told she has, only to discover she has none of the related symptoms. Confused and concerned, she went to a reputable surgeon the following day for a second opinion. "Absolutely no need for sur-

gery," the surgeon told her.

That same day the secretary of the first doctor who recommended the surgeries called the lady and asked if she could come in on Tuesday for her surgeries. This incident clearly demonstrates that the priority of some private hospitals is making money. It also proves the importance of always getting a second opinion before any surgery.

□ □ □

● Finally, the long awaited amnesty for overstaying or undocumented expats is finally here! Residence violators, mostly Asians queued up at their respective embassy on Monday on the first day of the amnesty. All are excited to go home while some are worried what job awaits them in their home country. Some still want to come back to Kuwait after exiting this

amnesty while others will try their luck somewhere else overseas. Thanks to the Kuwaiti government for the amnesty. But some are a bit worried because the amnesty period given is less than a month unlike the previous amnesty years back. The tedious process of filing a travel document, fingerprinting and acquiring an exit clearance and booking a flight. Most of the amnesty seekers are appealing for a longer period at least two to three months grace period. For now, they have to rush and beat the deadline!

□ □ □

● The Amnesty granted by the government took off on Monday 29th January 2018, and illegal residents from various countries are seen flocking at their embassies to process their documents and leave the country.

Overheard in the Souk

the grapevine

Thousands of illegal residents are also seen rushing to the immigration and residency department to get the amnesty stamps in an attempt to leave the country before the date is expired or pay their fines and stay in Kuwait as required by the amnesty law.

The embassies and the immigration department will be overwhelmed by these thousands of illegal residents who are rushing to beat the only 25 day-amnesty period which is very short compared to the previous amnesty which was 3 months. The period of this short-amnesty may not be enough to catch up, because some, if not majority of people, would need more time to gather money and pay for their fines or for their ticket. In this respect, it is hoped that the government will extend the amnesty period so that

it benefits all eligible people living in this country.

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● Certain neighbourhoods have to contend with trash bins overflowing with garbage, spilling over to the streets, fattening the feline population with great flourish. With all the advancements being made in technology, would it be so outrageous to demand the implementation of an automatic vacuum waste collection system? This isn't a novel idea for the Gulf region, an enterprising neighbour has such pipelines in the pipeline of its infrastructure development programme. Could Kuwaiti entrepreneurs and companies look into bringing in innovations like the pneumatic refuse collection technology instead of opening yet another coffee shop or burger place?

Tongues Way

Gaming

Battle-and-strategy games see low demand

Virtual beau captures Chinese hearts as female gaming blooms

SHANGHAI, Jan 31, (AFP): With his dashing looks, it's little wonder that 28-year-old tycoon Li Zeyan has wooed hundreds of thousands of women across China – not bad for an avatar in a mobile game.

Li is the most popular character in "Love and Producer", a Chinese simulation game that has been downloaded more than 10 million times since debuting in December, mostly by women seeking steamy fantasy affairs with its four virtual suitors.

Its viral popularity has highlighted a huge potential market for the gaming industry in China, where one in four mobile phone gamers is a woman – numbers that are expected to grow.

The game, and a separate one also aimed at women in which users can "mother" an intrepid frog character, have leapt into the top ranks of China's most-downloaded mobile games.

The frenzy over the games has focused attention on China's "she economy" – the expanding consumer power of its hundreds of millions of smartphone-wielding women – just as game developers face slowing growth in the gigantic market for battle-and-strategy games aimed largely at Chinese men.

In "Love and Producer", players choose from four Prince Charmings – business CEO Li, a scientist, a special agent and a famous singer – attractive "catches" that tap into the rising relationship expectations of



This file picture taken on Aug 14, 2017 shows a woman looking at her mobile phone as she walks at a mall in Beijing. (AFP)

Chinese millennial women.

China's huge population of mobile users already increasingly live

through their smartphones, communicating via messaging apps like WeChat, sharing on social media,

and paying digitally for a range of goods and services with a tap on their phone screen.

"Love and Producer" now also offers the chance to have a virtual fling while sitting on the bus, said Liu Yixuan, a 19-year-old university student.

"A third of my friends play the game and many insist on calling themselves Li's 'wife,'" Liu said.

"I'm intrigued by the characters' good looks and the graphics, but other 'wives' are obsessed with talking to their 'husband', who will reply with sweet words in a deep and attractive voice."

Patterned

Created by Nikki Games, a developer in eastern China, it was patterned on Japanese "otome", or "maiden" games, simulated-romance worlds generally aimed at women.

China already is a mobile-gaming leader, with internet giant Tencent in particular raking in profits from games like the hit "Honour of Kings" in which players spend on things like outfits for their characters.

In "Love and Producer", the player runs a fictional TV production company that they must save from bankruptcy, all while dating one or more of the male love interests.

Players complete tasks which allow them to collect cards that are in turn needed to realise a successful TV show – or an eventful "date" with one's lover. Cards can also be purchased.

Steamy embraces occur, though the action stops there.

In the "real" world, one unidentified fan wished Li Zeyan a happy birthday in a giant illuminated message projected on a skyscraper in the southern city of Shenzhen on January 13, a pricey stunt likely to have cost tens of thousands of yuan (several thousand dollars).

Various estimates put the percentages of US women who regularly play mobile games at 50 percent or higher, boosted by popular apps like the puzzle game Candy Crush.

Chinese consultancy iResearch said women accounted for 24.1 percent of gamers in China in 2016, but that figure is projected to climb.

"The overall mobile game industry faces a bottleneck in user growth, but female players have been unleashed in terms of playing time and their willingness and ability to pay," said Wang Guanxiang, an independent industry analyst.

"Female players are more inclined to share on social media, including their inner thoughts, and are more loyal. They will be the breakthrough point for game companies the next two years."

"Love and Producer" was recently leapfrogged by a Japanese-developed game called "Travelling Frog", in which players prepare an amphibian avatar for a journey.

For a week earlier this month, it was the top-downloaded app in China in the iOS Store.

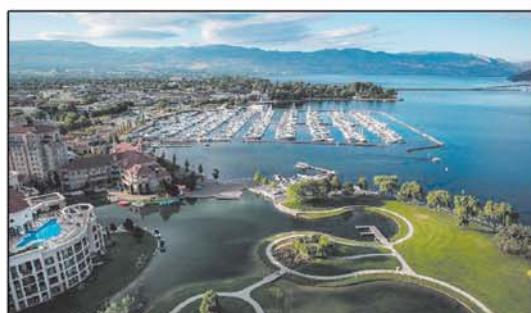
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This week we will travel to Canada



7. Kelowna

Located on the sunny Lake Okanagan, Kelowna offers a cure for whatever ails you. Spend the weekend golfing, relaxing on the beach or exploring a nature trail. The Okanagan Valley is chock-full of orchards, while many local vineyards offer wine tasting and tours. Stop at the mid-19th-century Father Pandosy Mission for a glimpse of Kelowna's history, then plan a moonlit cruise on the lake to end your day.



alarming speeds can be mesmerizing. Throw on a poncho and hop aboard the Maid of the Mist to cruise close enough to the falls to be drenched by spray. Hit the main strip of Clifton Hill for flashy tourist attractions and restaurants galore.

9. Cape Breton Island

"For simple beauty, Cape Breton outrivals them all." So said Alexander Graham Bell of the island he adopted as his home. Rich with Celtic, Mi'kmaq and Acadian heritage, Cape Breton is a delight for history buffs, music lovers and explorers of nature. Immerse yourself in 18th-century life at the Fortress of Louisbourg, explore the winding roads and Atlantic vistas of the Cabot Trail.

8. Niagara Falls

Once a destination for honeymoons and family vacations, Niagara Falls has really stepped it up as an action-packed vacation spot. The falls are literally the biggest draw - watching the frothy water tumble at

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Goldman Sachs workshop held for bank's private banking clients

AUB organises event on 'Investment Outlook for 2018'

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: Ahli United Bank (AUB) recently held an event for Private Banking clients which included a lecture entitled 'The Investment Outlook for 2018', as part of its continued efforts in offering advice and consultancy services on investments to its current and potential customers. The lecture was held to provide greater awareness of investment opportunities across a number of different markets.

The lecture, held in Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Cultural Center, was delivered to a select group of the bank's Private Banking clients, who have been keen to attend similar events organized by AUB, to keep abreast of the changing dynamics across the financial and investment sector.

The lecture was led by Oliver Rahe, Head of Distribution in the Middle East and North Africa and



Fahad Al Saif, Executive Director GCC from Goldman Sachs Asset Management, who focused on the

future of investments in different global markets shedding light on the general outlook for various econo-



Photos from the event.

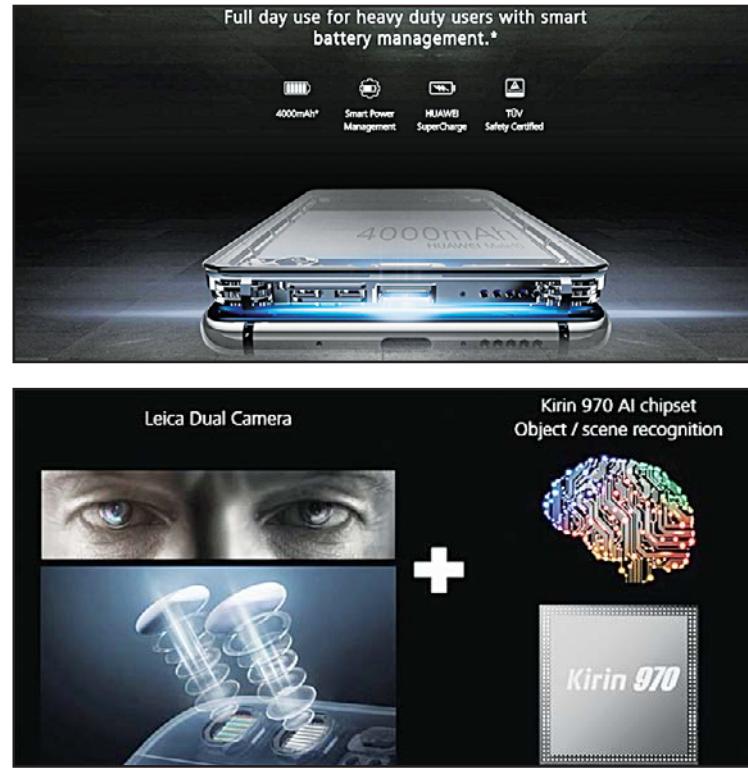
mies. Moreover, they answered questions that revolved around the continued growth of the equities

market and the overall link to the reevaluation of assets and potential risks in 2018. Medhat Tawfiq,

General Manager of AUB's Private Banking and Wealth Management, welcomed the attendees in his introductory address, and said, "We aim to organize such events to provide the opportunity for our Private Banking clients to benefit from an insight into global investment opportunities whilst highlighting the various risks associated with investments and markets performances."

"The resources and consultations that AUB provides our clients allows them to better manage their investments in an ever changing global environment," added Tawfiq.

In his closing note, Medhat Tawfiq, "We are very pleased with the outcome of this event. Hosting such sessions reflects the Bank's desire to provide improved services for its clients. AUB will continue to provide first class banking services for its clients."



Devices become more powerful

Huawei Mate 10 series: AI & future of mobile intelligence

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: Artificial Intelligence (AI) is changing the way both businesses and individuals function. The ability to process, leverage, and learn from big data means machines are becoming more powerful in the one area they could not compete with humans: they can now think, and faster. Huawei views this as an important turning point and a shift from the smart to the intelligence revolution.

The spirit of Huawei Mate 10 series is built on that very concept — to create innovative devices that help make the lives of our consumers easier. As Huawei continues to drive the new era of 'intelligent technology', all eyes are on Huawei for the upcoming Mobile World Congress where Huawei Mate 10 Pro is shortlisted for the Best Smartphone category at the Global Mobile Awards 2018. Today's users need technology to be more humane, transparent and rapid, which is why the core of Huawei devices revolve around intelligent power, intelligent speed and intelligent camera. A phone that adapts to a user's behavior and needs, from auto-adjusting camera settings to optimizing battery usage, for example, is just the start.

AI-powered phones like Huawei Mate 10 series means that app developers can now capitalize on the power of Huawei's Kirin 970chipset - a mobile artificial intelligence computing platform that runs on

15 lucky ABK customers win 100,000 Skywards miles each

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: Under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce, Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) held a draw on Wednesday Jan 11th 2018, to announce the winners of its latest promotion, which was launched last month to celebrate a 15-year long partnership with Emirates Skywards. The draw was held at the Bank's Head Office, and rewarded 15 customers with 100,000 Skywards Miles each. The 15 winners of the campaign were:

1 Dr Faisal Ali Alhowell , Jabriya Branch

2 Dr Nadia Mohammed Alnaki, University Branch

3 Haidar Hasan Khaleel, Farwaniya Branch

4 Meysam Zamani Gerashi, Head Office Branch

5 Lahdan Adel Al Lahdan, Al-Andalus Branch

6 Ahmed Farah, Salimiya branch

7 Hamoud Nassar Al Hassini, Jahra Branch

8 George Fouad Khoury, Head Office Branch

9 Salman Esam Bin Haidar, Mansouriya Branch

10 Vibash Gupata Kumar, Head Office Branch

11 Karim Sulaiman Al Mawash, Head Office Branch

12 Abdul Hafeez Mohammed IRshad, Kaitan Branch

13 Abdulatif Ahmed Al Sarraf, Mansouriya Branch

14 Saleh Abdullah Al Ateeqi, Head Office Branch

15 Jumana Fadhel Al Shatti, Galleria 2000 Branch

The Skywards Miles can be redeemed



for reward flights and upgrades on Emirates, as well as luxury hotel stays, fun-filled family days out, or even tickets to a wide range of sporting and cultural events across the globe. With 100,000 Skywards Miles, the lucky winners could book 2 return Economy Class tickets from Kuwait to London or stay in some of the top hotels in the world with Emirates Skywards hotel partner Rocketmiles. Stays start from only 5,000 Skywards Miles. The Skywards Miles can also be used in combination with cash to redeem flights under Emirates' Cash+Miles product.

The month-long promotion covered all ABK Emirates Credit Cards through point-of-sale and cash withdrawal transactions, and the ABK Emirates Prepaid Card through point-of-sale transactions only. In order to be eligible to win, the cards needed to be issued before the promotion start date of 1st December 2017, and required a minimum spend of KD 100 during the transaction period.

For more information about ABK, please visit eahli.com or contact an ABK customer service agent via 'Ahlan Ahli' at 189989.

The Skywards Miles can be redeemed



Thierry Sabbagh, Managing Director of Ford Middle East

gaining prominence on the list of consumer demands in the Middle East, Ford's multi-award winning turbocharged engine technology continues to receive more and more demand, especially as consumers realize the unique benefits the EcoBoost range offers in terms of fuel economy without sacrificing performance.

EcoBoost engines power a vast range of models in the current Ford line-up in the Middle East, including the nimble Focus, the larger Taurus, utility vehicles like the Ford Kuga, Edge, Explorer, Expedition and even the mighty beast, the F-150 Raptor pickup. EcoBoost technology also lies behind the success of the Le Mans class-winning racer, the Ford GT supercar.

Commercial Vehicles

Ford's Commercial Vehicles team made a significant contribution to the business in 2017 by developing unique fleet solutions and securing key tenders

in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The globally best-selling Ford Transit — a byword for versatility and dependability in markets across the globe — has made major inroads into a range of commercial applications last year; one of which is the Dubai Corporation for Ambulance Services (DCAS) new "ambulance of the future", on show this week as part of the stand at the Arab Health Exhibition and Congress in Dubai.

Additionally, more and more SMEs also continue to look to Transit and its derivatives as the perfect partner that delivered exactly what these businesses needed in terms of capability, fuel efficiency and safety features. And just recently, large businesses such as Souq.com and DHL have adopted the Ford Transit as part of their growing fleets.

Lincoln luxury

The Lincoln luxury brand is looking for a bright year in 2018, following a successful 2017. The brand remains

committed to the Middle East and continues to grow its presence throughout the region thanks to dealers investing in stand-alone facilities and network expansions in the UAE, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

The newly-announced all-new Lincoln Navigator has received an outstanding welcome to the region, with demand outstripping initial supply. The ultra-exclusive Presidential range of trim options has also been greeted with enthusiasm from customers who are keen to push the limits of luxury even further.

Customer satisfaction

One area that Ford has been relentlessly working with its dealer partners is customer satisfaction. According to Ford's own customer satisfaction survey, more and more customers are satisfied with the level of sales and after-sales services they are receiving from Ford dealers.

Double-digit increase in mid-size crossover, full-size sedan segments

Ford sees retail sales growth in Mideast



Ford Expedition

Q1 draw of KD 200,000 on March 28

Gulf Bank welcomes youngest Al Danah Millionaire

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: Gulf Bank welcomed Obaid Saad Al-Rishdi, Kuwait's newest and youngest Al Danah Millionaire, and his family to the Bank. Obaid won the Bank's annual and largest Al Danah account prize of One Million Kuwaiti Dinars on Jan 11th during the big draw event.

Obaid and his family met with a senior group of executives at Gulf Bank to celebrate his win. Commenting on the meeting, Ms Laila Al-Qatami, Assistant General Manager for Corporate Communications, said: "We were extremely happy to meet Obaid and his family to congratulate them. The family opened Al Danah accounts for their children several years ago but never anticipated winning the big prize. This year Gulf Bank's Al Danah account is celebrating its ten-year anniversary of making millionaires and due to this, meeting with this year's Millionaire and his family was a highlight for us, we wish them all the best."

Until the end of March, Gulf Bank's Al Danah eligible customers will continue to have a chance to win in the daily draws in which two winners will be receiving KD 1000 each, every working day. However, from April onwards, Al Danah's draw line-up will be replaced with weekly draws, in which five-selected winners will receive KD 1,000 each, every week.

This year's first Al Danah much-coveted quarterly draw offering a prize of KD 200,000 will be held on 28 March 2018. In January 2019, the award value will be replaced with KD 150,000.

Gulf Bank's Al Danah second quarterly draw 2018 for the prize of KD 250,000 will be held on June 27, 2018 and the third quarterly draw for the prize of KD 500,000 on Sept 26 2018. The final Al Danah draw for KD 1 million — the Guinness World Record acclaimed largest prize linked to a bank account in the world — will be held on Jan 10, 2019, when the Al Danah millionaire will be announced.

Gulf Bank encourages you to increase your chances by depositing more into your Al Danah account, immediately from any local bank, using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's Online and Mobile Banking.

Al Danah also offers a number of unique services including: the Al Danah Deposit Only ATM card which helps account holders deposit their money at their convenience; as well as the Al Danah calculator to help customers calculate their chances of becoming an Al Danah winner.

to visit Ireland for a holiday or business.

"The national airline is delighted to celebrate this landmark moment with the introduction of special fares for UAE nationals travelling to Ireland, which we hope will encourage more UAE nationals to visit the 'Emerald Isle'."

Over the coming months, Etihad Airways will continue to work closely with its partner, Tourism Ireland, to promote the visa requirements changes and introduce special campaigns to highlight Ireland as an attractive tourist destination.

Etihad Airways operates double daily return flights between Abu Dhabi and Dublin. The airline deploys a two-class Airbus A330-200, configured with 22 Business and 240 Economy Class seats.

monthly basis to the account until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the daily draw within two days.

To take part in the Al Danah 2018 upcoming quarterly and yearly draws, customers must meet the required hold period for each draw; customers can visit one of Gulf Bank's 57 branches, transfer online, or call the Customer Contact Center on 1805805 for assistance and guidance. Customers can also log on to www.e-gulfbank.com/aldanahwinners, to find out more about Al Danah and its winners.

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Social media helps young Iranians expand their horizons

New wave of Iranian globetrotters hits the road

TEHRAN, Jan 31, (AFP): A travel frenzy is gripping young Iranians, who are inspiring each other through social media to overcome traditional constraints and expand their horizons.

The exploits of young Iranian travellers, hitchhiking and backpacking their way around the globe, have become immensely popular on Instagram and Telegram, the most widely used apps in Iran, with some gathering more than 200,000 followers.

Iran has long had a globetrotting elite thanks to the large diaspora that fled to the United States and Europe after the 1979 revolution, but now it is the turn of the emerging middle class to stretch their wings, overcoming cultural barriers and parental worries in the process.

Sara Louee, 31, grew up thinking that holidays were a family trip to the northern coasts of Iran.

But two years ago, she met a group of foreigners through the website couchsurfing.com and joined them as they hitchhiked to the ancient city of Yazd.

She was unprepared: "I had abso-

lutely no equipment. I was wearing flimsy girly shoes and had borrowed a backpack from a friend," she told AFP.

But her mind was opened to a world of possibility and she was soon saving for a 40-day trip around Europe, even if it meant battling with her conservative-minded parents.

Trust

"My family didn't accept it easily or overnight. I went through a lot of pain. But I gradually proved I could do it with shorter trips and gained their trust," said Louee, who now blogs regularly about her travels.

"These days, if I stay home at the weekend, my dad comes over and asks if something is wrong," she added, laughing.

Other young Iranians, particularly women, say they had been taught that travelling alone was dangerous.

"When I told people I stayed in a hostel in Europe, Iranians would be shocked and say 'You mean there were strangers in your room?! Didn't they do anything to you?'" said Mahzad Elyassi, another travel

blogger. She only heard about hitchhiking for the first time in 2015 but has since travelled to all 32 of Iran's provinces and 20 countries.

"We've proven that Iran is really safe for such trips. It's become a trend."

"One woman said she used my Instagram page to convince her husband, saying: 'If she can do it alone, so can we.'"

Last year, Iran recorded 9.2 million departures, a 38.5-percent increase on the previous year and almost double the numbers a decade ago.

The trend has been helped by President Hassan Rouhani, who came to power in 2013 promising to improve Iran's relations with the world.

Iranians are not welcome everywhere: the United States this year banned them from entry unless they have close family, and European countries have strict and laborious procedures for tourists designed to weed out poor people.

But much of the rest of the world



An Iranian traveller arrives at a bus terminal in Tehran on Jan 13. (AFP)

Technology

That has helped encourage travel among those outside of the rich elite by putting the focus on cheaper countries.

"Maybe Iranians don't have

enough dollars or euros to travel to Europe but they can explore places like southeast Asia," said Elyassi.

Technology has also been crucial. "When I started, Google Maps didn't exist. People couldn't just easily travel and share their experiences," said Reza Pakravan, 43, one of Iran's best-known travellers after he broke the world record for crossing the Sahara on a bike.

Alireza Zafari, 38, has spent two years on the "Herculean task" of documenting the whole of Iran for travellers, a project he expects will take another eight years to complete.

He hopes to encourage more Iranians and foreigners to visit Iran's beauty spots rather than the default option of popping across the border to Turkey, still the top choice for Iranians with 2.1 million visits last year thanks to cheap package tours and the availability of booze.

"The reason behind the travel wave is that people have become aware of the world, and technology gives them easy access to the information they need," Zafari told AFP.

Travel

click

General

Continued from Page 18

KIFF anti-drugs campaign: As part of the Fraternity fest, Kuwait India Fraternity Forum (KIFF) is conducting Anti-Drugs Campaign among Indians living in Kuwait. According to the available statistics of Indian Embassy, 60% of the convicted Indians in Kuwaiti Jails are arrested on drug-related cases. The recent cases of death and captives of Indian drug abusers is a threatening news. To defend and to campaign against such social crisis by protecting individuals as well as the society has become obligatory. In this current situation, Kuwait India Fraternity Forum is conducting campaign by distributing handouts, conducting counseling, seminars etc, to educate the Indians living in Kuwait informed President Saifudheen Nalakath in a press release. For more details contact: 55062071 or email at kiffkuwait@gmail.com.

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NYF offers free yoga classes: NYF Kuwait offers free yoga, breathing, meditation and reiki classes by a well-experienced female yoga teacher for all age groups. Classes are given on the basis of different health problems, stress and other problems by different techniques. Contact: 99315825.

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Leadership Excellence Course: The Leadership Excellence Course (LEC) is a course modeled on the Seerah of Rasoolullah who is the best model of leadership for all mankind. The LEC focuses on the lessons that we can learn from the Seerah of Rasoolullah and see how we can apply them in our lives to become winners in this world and the next.

The objectives of the course are 1. Understand what leadership is from the Seerah of Rasoolullah and how to apply it in our lives today 2. Understand the purpose of our lives and learn to live that purpose with confidence 3. Understand the importance of connecting to Allah and learn how to do it 4. Understand how to leverage your strengths and overcome weaknesses 5. Understand how to articulate your life goal and create a road map to achieve it.

For more information please visit www.leckuwait.com or call 99514995 / 66363310.

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AWL registration: If you would like to join the American Women's League (AWL), please call 99039723 or 94067999 or email: kuwaitawl@yahoo.com. All American women and wives of Americans are welcomed.

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Ugandans register with UIK: Are you a Ugandan living and working in Kuwait? Would you like to get in touch with other Ugandans in Kuwait both socially and professionally? Then please get in touch with us. We would like to invite you to register with the Ugandans in Kuwait (UIK) association, an informal organization of Ugandans living and working in Kuwait. The purpose of this exercise is to get together as Ugandans and to consider taking the first steps to establishing a more formal organisation. This association is voluntary. It is designed to create a forum for Ugandans in Kuwait to foster a sense of community, to communicate more effectively with each other and to encourage Ugandans out here to work together.

We are also planning a celebration to mark 50 years of Ugandan's Independence this year. If you have any questions regarding this association or if you are interested in registering, then please send us an email at ugandan-sinkuwait@gmail.com. We hope to hear from you soon.

□ □ □

TIES Center events: TIES Center announces following events – Tajweed and Recitation: Learn and practice the Holy Quran (tajweed). The instructor will also answer questions related to the meaning of the Arabic words and verses.

Every Sunday & Tuesday @ 10 – 11:30am; every Monday @ 5:30pm.

The TIES Center is the social and educational hub for English Speaking expats in Kuwait. For more information, please call 25231015 or e-mail info@tiescenter.net or visit www.tiescenter.net.



This undated image provided by MSC Cruises shows the four-deck atrium at the heart of MSC Seaside. (AP)



This undated image provided by Carnival Cruise Line shows guests on a Carnival cruise participating in a Dr Seuss-themed 'Green Eggs and Ham' breakfast. (AP)



This undated image provided by Royal Caribbean shows the Ultimate Family Suite debuting on Symphony of the Seas, which will be the world's largest cruise ship when it launches in spring. (AP)



This undated image rendering provided by Celebrity Cruises shows the Magic Carpet on Celebrity Edge. (AP)

Boom in small cruising: 'It's not about the slides'

A look at new ships, trends in cruising

By Beth J. Harpaz

What's new in cruising for 2018? As usual, there's lots of razzle-dazzle — laser tag, water slides, zip lines and massive LED screens — along with a continued emphasis on healthy lifestyle options, from dining to fitness.

But there are also changes underway in ship design, itineraries and who's cruising.

New ships are offering more outdoor spaces and views of the sea, with promenades, boardwalk-style decks, glass walls, transparent walkways and see-through slides.

Small ships, river ships and expedition cruises are booming, with more itineraries in cold-water destinations like Iceland, Greenland and the polar regions. Alaska cruises are as popular as ever, for big and small vessels.

There's a new focus on marketing to millennials, many of whom cruised as kids. Royal Caribbean says its shorter cruises — like three- and four-night Miami-Bahamas trips — are proving popular with 20-somethings who may not want to commit to a full week at sea. Uniworld is offering "U by Uniworld" river cruises for ages 21-45 only, with European itineraries that include music festivals.

The Cruise Lines International Association, which represents most of the world's major cruise brands, noticed another new phenomenon: "skip-gen" cruising. Grandparents are cruising with grandkids, but skipping a generation by sailing without mom and dad. Most cruises provide a range of children's programming so grandparents aren't baby-sitting all day, while also offering activities, excursions, meals and shows that all ages can enjoy together.

The cruise industry continues to grow, with 27 million cruisers expected in 2018, a million more than last year and up from 18 million in 1979. There are also 27 new ships coming out in 2018, according to CLIA: 10 for river cruising, 17 for ocean.

"We're in our golden age," said CLIA Chairman Arnold Donald, who is also CEO of Carnival Corp., at a Jan 25 meeting in New York. "Cruising has never been more popular."

Features

Royal Caribbean's Symphony of the Seas will be the world's largest cruise ship when it launches this spring. Its inaugural season will be in Europe, with sailings from Miami beginning in November. Features include a laser tag arena, Bionic Bar where robots make drinks, a 10-story racing slide called Ultimate Abyss, rock climbing and ice skating. The ship will host a production of the Broadway hit "Hairspray" and its sports bar will feature 30 big-screen TVs. A luxury family suite for eight includes a two-story slide, private movie theater, Lego wall and secret crawl space. But it's not for budget cruising: It's priced in the tens of thousands of dollars.

Norwegian Cruise Line's Norwegian Bliss also launches this spring and heads to Alaska. It's designed for enjoying natural scenery, with a 180-degree observation lounge for watching glaciers. Recreation includes laser tag, a race course for electric go-karts, a waterslide

and a transparent tube that swooshes you along the side of the ship.

Other features include a Beatles club with a cover band and a spa with a snow room and a salt room. Norwegian is starting to move away from the celebrity chef craze, but dining options will include a barbecue spot called Q, Los Lobos for Mexican food and Food Republic, where dishes like ceviche or Asian noodles can be ordered from an iPad.

Holland America Line launches the Nieuw Statendam in December. The ship's features include World Stage, an entertainment venue with a two-story, 270-degree wraparound LED screen; Music Walk, where three lounges offer different genres of music; and BLEND, where guests can blend their own wine. Holland America is also continuing a partnership with O, The Oprah Magazine, through 2018, on 300 cruises with programs for meditation, health, style and even a book club that's included onboard appearances by authors like Elizabeth Strout. Holland America Line is also starting round-trip Boston-Cuba trips this year.

Celebrity Edge begins sailing in November. Its futuristic design concepts include the Magic Carpet, a cantilevered

movable deck that will serve as a walkway, a place to enjoy ocean views and a space for live music and themed dining. The new ship also features a venue called Eden with a three-level window on the ocean, al fresco seating, walkways and an "Eve at Eden" experience that will blend performance art and unique culinary offerings.

Carnival Horizon debuts in April with a Dr Seuss-themed water park, an eatery called Smokehouse Brew-house featuring Guy Fieri barbecue and craft beers brewed onboard, and an LED Dreamscape atrium sculpture that will show artwork by patients of St Jude Children's Research Hospital, a Carnival charity partner. Carnival Vista already has the three-deck-high Dreamscape light panels. Other fun features on Carnival ships range from "Green Eggs and Ham"-themed breakfasts for kids to Lip Sync Battles à la the popular Spike TV show to custom cocktails at the Alchemy Bar.

MSC Cruises are better known in Europe than North America, but the brand is working to change that. In December, MSC Seaside launched and was named best new ship of 2017 by CruiseCritic.com. It features an interactive aqua-park, open-air promenade with glass-floor catwalks, two zip lines, a four-deck atrium, Aurea spa with a snow room and beachside condo suites. You can even see the sea from glass elevators. Seaside, with a 4,100-guest capacity, is based in Miami for Caribbean itineraries. Its sister ship, MSC Seaview, launches in June with Mediterranean cruises for its inaugural season.

Cruise ships carrying thousands of people have gotten all the headlines in cruising in recent years. But there's also been a boom in small ships, river cruises and what's known as expedition cruising on ships designed to sail in places like the polar regions.

New river ships are launching this year from brands like AmaWaterways and Crystal Cruises. New expedition ships are coming out from Ponant and

Scenic Luxury Tours & Cruises. And Viking, which was once known just for river ships, is coming out with its fifth ocean-going ship this year. Even Viking's ocean-going ships are smaller than the 4,000- to 6,000-passenger vessels that have become de rigueur at big cruise lines like Royal Caribbean: Viking Orion, which debuts this summer, will carry 930 guests.

Experience

But the experience of sailing on a ship that carries a few hundred or even 1,000 people is very different from the experience of cruising on a ship so big that it's practically a floating city with dozens of eateries and water parks with massive slides.

"It's not about the slides," said Eva Santiago, assistant cruise director aboard the Seabourn Sojourn. Santiago was one of 360 crew members on a recent sailing with 450 guests. That ratio of nearly 1:1 staff to passengers offers more personalized service than is possible on a ship four or five times bigger. Smaller ships won't have a full production of a Broadway show, like "Hairspray" debuting on a new Royal Caribbean ship this year, but you might find Santiago singing opera on the deck of the Sojourn under the stars.

Small ship cruises are usually more expensive than big ships but they're also usually all-inclusive. That means alcohol, shore excursions and other items that you'd pay extra for on a big cruise ship are covered in the fare for a small ship.

Smaller ships may also be more understated in style, with a casual elegance that's a stark contrast to the glitzy Vegas-style decor that's often a hallmark of massive spaces on bigger ships. Or if they're expedition ships with a focus on rugged adventures to see wildlife and scenery in the Galapagos or Greenland, the ships may have fewer creature comforts onboard but a more compelling experience on land than you'd get in a typical port of call in a beach town. (AP)



In this Oct 4, 2017 file photo, Viking Sky, the third 930-guest ocean ship from Viking, sails past the Statue of Liberty as it calls on New York for the first time. (AP)

What's On

By Jacqueline Bigar

Happy birthday for Thursday, February 1, 2018: This year you will be more active in creating your own reality. The unexpected often occurs when dealing with others. You frequently need to confirm that you and others are on the same page. You might not always agree, which is OK. Your sign is associated with friendship and goodwill. If you are single, others find you particularly charming. Take your time making decisions about whom you'd like to date. If you are attached, the two of you often have different financial concerns. You might need to address them sooner rather than later. VIRGO uses precision when dealing with money matters.

The Stars Show the Kind of Day You'll Have: 5-Dynamic; 4-Positive; 3-Average; 2-So-so; 1-Difficult.

Capricorn - (Dec 22 - Jan 19)

*** Reach out to someone at a distance

home decor



decorative lamp shade

Supplies:

Silk flowers
Silk petals
Hot glue gun
Lampshade

Instructions:

Unscrew the lampshade and set aside. Collect as many silk flowers and petals as you get. Once you have the design in mind, carefully hot glue the flowers to the lampshade. Start with the big flower and then add in the smaller flowers. Follow this up with the petals. Allow it to dry completely. Now screw back the lampshade.

indoor gardening



fatsia spider's web

The shiny green palmate leaves, like a super-sized schefflera, are each bordered with a heavy white speckling that often finds its way into the center of the leaf. Fatsia 'Spider's Web' makes a superb houseplant.

Site: Bright light — avoid direct sunshine. It prefers a cool, well-ventilated and bright condition.

Temperature: Average or above average warmth in summer. Keep fairly cool in winter — minimum temperature 55° F or 16° C.

Water: Water freely from spring to autumn — sparingly in winter. Use tepid water. Mist leaves frequently, especially in hot weather.

beauty tips



baking soda for acne

Baking soda is an effective topical anti-acne remedy that works exfoliating dead skin cells and other particles clogging. It is used topically to remove pimples and points blacks, and smooths and softens the skin.

Take a bit of water in a bowl and pour some baking soda that it makes a cream like substance. Apply to affected areas where you're having acne and to the whole skin if you want a smooth skin.

taste buds



turkey chili

Ingredients: 1 tbsp olive oil; 1 pound lean ground turkey; 1 tbsp minced garlic; 2 1/2 tsp ground cumin; 1/2 tsp each salt and pepper; 1 can chicken broth; 1 can black beans, rinsed; 2 cup frozen corn kernels; 1/2 cup uncooked converted white rice; 1/2 cup green salsa; 1 cup chopped sweet onion; 1/2 cup chopped cilantro.

Method: Heat oil in a deep, large nonstick skillet; add turkey and garlic and cook, stirring to break up meat, 3 to 4 minutes until browned. Add cumin, salt and pepper; cook, stirring, 30 seconds. Stir in broth, beans, corn, rice and salsa. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer, stirring occasionally, 20 to 25 minutes until rice is tender.

Dear Abby

Boy longs to 'distance' himself from family strife

By Abigail Van Buren

Dear Abby: I'm an 18-year-old guy who's having troubles regarding my family. My parents are divorced, and I moved out of my mom's house after I graduated.

After the divorce, I flipped back and forth between living with either Mom or Dad. I moved into my mother's after an argument with my stepmom, who insists that I call her "Mother." I don't consider her my mother. My father is an alcoholic and was completely impaired when he married her. I've never forgiven him. When I visit, I can't help but feel no longer welcome.

My mother (a hypocritical tiger mom) made my high school career so stressful it pushed me into severe depression, so I spoke to a doctor who prescribed medication for me and gave me therapist referrals. Since I moved out, I've never been happier.

My siblings and I have never been closer, other than at times when we needed someone to talk to about our parental situation.

Abigail I have been thinking about disappearing and starting a new life on my own with no thought of my family past. I'm not sure if it's worth fixing the mess my family has become. Advice?

— Breaking away

Dear breaking: For your stepmother to demand that you call her "Mother" was wrong. She is not and never will be your mother. (Besides, you already have one of those.) For your mother to have pushed you to succeed academically is normal when a parent thinks her child has potential that isn't being realized. That she was so heavy-handed that it had the opposite effect is very sad.

If you would like to move away and start a new life, no one can stop you. At 18, you are considered an adult. But do NOT think it would be healthy for you to do it in anger and without mending fences, if that's possible. Running away will not have the effect you're looking for because your family will still be living in your head.



Dear Abby: I believe my wife is egocentric. She has five framed pictures of herself around the house. Even the wallpaper on her tablet is of herself. If we have a disagreement about anything, she won't talk to me for days unless I break the ice. It's ruining our 2 1/2-year marriage. Any suggestions?

— Mystified in the South

Dear mystified: Yes, be less quick to judge her because of the photos she keeps around the house. The reason may have less to do with egocentrism than insecurity.

What's destroying your marriage isn't the pictures; it's your wife's inability to fight fair. Her silent treatment is emotionally abusive; it's not a healthy way to solve a disagreement. A licensed marriage and family therapist may be able to help the two of you communicate more effectively. If your wife won't agree to it, go alone.



Dear Abby: Should I marry someone who doesn't love me more than anyone in this world?

— Jim in Virginia

Dear Jim: I think that depends on who else the person loves.



Dear Abby: Is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

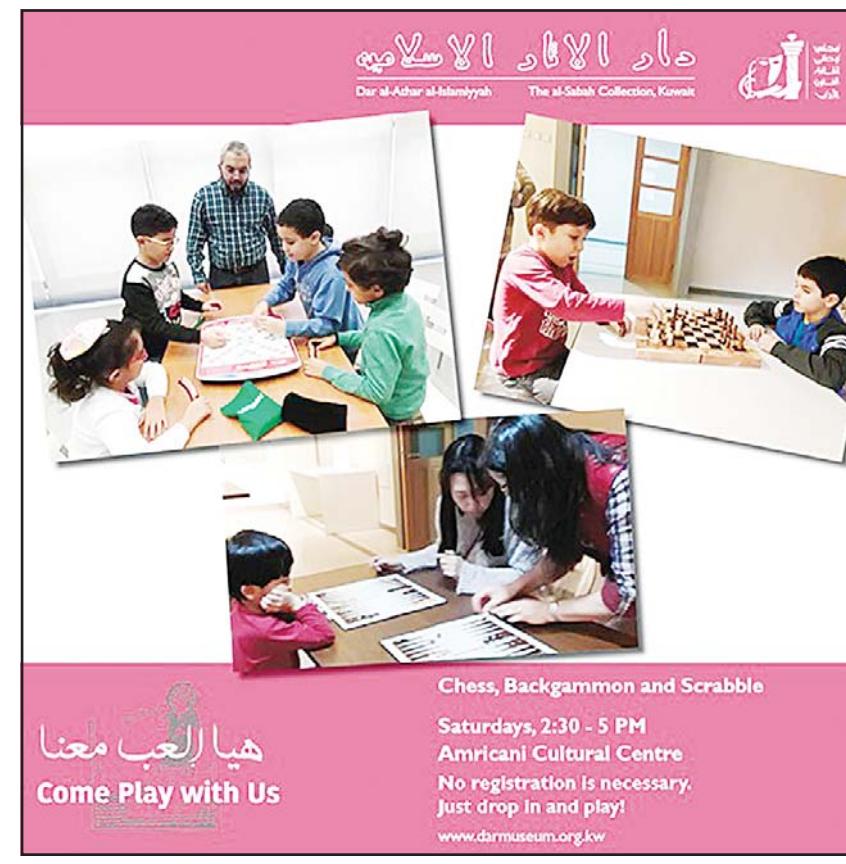
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what's on today

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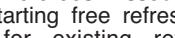


A flyer of the event

Items for the What's On page can be sent directly to the Arab Times, P.O. Box 2270, 13023, Safat or faxed to 24818267 or e-mail to arabtimes@arabtimesonline.com.

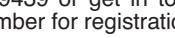
All items on this page are published as a courtesy to the public. These announcements can include birthday greetings, weddings, social functions or any other non-commercial events. Photographs of all events are welcome.

World Federation now opens a new batch of training. Learn the Philippine national sports, which is Arnis/Eskrima with the authentic style and techniques. Training schedule will be every Friday from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm @ Kaifan Sports Complex-Karate Gym. Text or call #50292148-Herms.

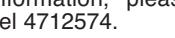


■ Free IFRA coaching classes: Indian Football Referees Association (IFRA) will be starting free refresher/coaching classes for existing referees, new recruits, those aspiring to be referees and even those who would like to learn about the laws of the game at IEAS – Salmiya (Don Bosco).

Classes will be from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm every Friday. Those interested may call 99519439 or get in touch with any IFRA member for registration.



■ Tagalog Khutba for Filipinos: The Ministry of Awqaf, Islam Presentation Committee, & Kuwait Philippine Cultural Center (KPC Center) invites all Filipino Muslim & Muslims to hear Khutba (Sermon) in Tagalog every Friday at Marzouq Al-Badr Mosque, Abu Bakr Al-Siddeeq St (at the back of Ambassador Supermarket and SM Supermarket, near Salhiya Police Station & Kuwait Airways Bldg) in Kuwait City. There will be a community started and lunch after Friday prayers at KPC Center in Farwaniya. For further information, please call KPC Center, Tel 4712574.



■ St Paul's Church weekly activities: English worship services on Fridays at 10:30 am and on Sundays at 6:30 pm. The Friday English service has separate sessions for children and youth. A Mandarin language speaking congregations meets separately on Fridays at 10:30 am in the Youth Centre at St Paul's. A combined service with the English and Mandarin language congregations is held on the first Friday of every month. A family service is held on the second Friday of every month with presentations from different organs of the church. The Church of Pakistan has services in English every Thursday at St Paul's at 5:35 pm and for Urdu language speaking members every Friday at Diwaniya of the NECK Centre, Kuwait City at 5:45 pm. Please contact Fr Michael Mboma on mobile 65960781 or call at Church house on 23985929 or email to chaplain@stpaulskuwait.com or mrboma@gmail.com. For Mandarin speaking congregation contact Revd Zhu Peijin on 99551783 and her email address is greenolivettc@hotmail.com.

Contact person: Fr Michael Mboma Mobile: 65960781 Email: mrboma@gmail.com



Kuwait Episcopal Churches Fellowship (KECF) conducted the Clergy meeting for the clergies of the 18 Episcopal parishes in Kuwait on Jan 25 at Abbasiya, Jleeb Al-Shuyukh. The meeting was chaired by the KEFC president Rev Fr Kochumon Thomas. The chief guests of the meeting were Very Rev Paulose Parekkara Cor-Episcopa and Rev Fr Shibu Kuttappichel. The meeting was hosted by St Thomas Evangelical Church of India, Kuwait Parish. KEFC Vice-President Rev Fr Eldho C. Mathew delivered the vote of thanks. Rev George Varghese, Rev Prince Korah, Rev T. V. Yesudas, Rev Sunil John, Rev Fr Eldho Palayil, Rev Fr Mathew M. Mathew, Rev Fr Jacob Thomas, Rev Biju Sam, Rev Fr Giju George, Rev Fr Sanju John, Rev Fr Anil Varghese, Rev Daniel Josiah, Rev J.J. Emmanuel, Rev Levin Koshy, Rev Johnson Alexander, Rev Bobby Mathew and Rev Saji Abraham also attended the Clergy meeting.

What's On

Health

Liver, lung cancers quick killers

Global cancer 'survival' up, but progress uneven

PARIS, Jan 31, (AFP): Cancer survival is increasing across the world but large gaps endure between nations, while some cancers remain hard to treat everywhere, according to a major review released Wednesday.

The progress, and the gap, are especially large for childhood cancers, according to the CONCORD-3 study covering 71 nations and 18 types of cancer, published in the medical journal The Lancet.

For children with brain tumours, for example, five-year survival has improved across the board from 54 percent for the period 2000-2004, to more than 60 percent for 2010-2014.

Progressed

In the United States, Denmark, Sweden and Slovakia, the survival rate progressed to 80 percent or better. In Mexico and Brazil, however, less than 40 percent of children diagnosed with brain tumours survived in the 2010-2014 period.

Similarly, five-year survival for the most common type of childhood cancer — acute lymphoblastic leukaemia — rose to higher than 90 percent in Canada, the United States and nine European countries, but remained below 60 percent in China and Mexico.

"This likely reflects the availability and quality of diagnostic and treatment services," the authors said in a statement.

The world has seen across-the-board progress on breast cancer, the study showed.

For women diagnosed with the disease in the United States and Australia between 2010 and 2014, five-year survival was 90 percent. In 16 western European countries, the rate improved to 85 percent, and stood at 71 percent for eastern European nations.

In India, breast cancer survival improved during those five years to 66 percent.

Liver and lung cancers remain quick killers in both rich and developing countries, but the last 20 years have seen some progress.

Between 1995 and 2014, liver

cancer survival increased in South Korea (from 11 to 27 percent), Sweden (5 to 17 percent), and Portugal (8 to 19 percent).

Similarly, lung cancer survival went up by 5 to 10 percent in 21 countries, including Britain. The most progress was seen in China (from 8 to 20 percent), Japan (23 to 33 percent), and South Korea (10 to 25 percent).

Pancreatic cancer remained highly lethal everywhere, with five-year survival rates typically under 15 percent.

"Greater international efforts are needed to understand the risk factors for this rapidly lethal cancer," said co-author Michel Coleman, a researcher at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine.

Led by Claudia Allemani from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, the Concord-3 study marshalled hundreds of experts and more than 300 cancer registries covering 37.5 million cancer cases — three-quarters of all the cancers diagnosed worldwide from 2000 to 2014.

Thirty-one European countries were included, along with 17 from Asia and 13 from Latin America. Only six African countries were included, due to a lack of data.

"Despite more than 20 years of advocacy for ... fully functional cancer registries, both political and financial support remains woeful," said Richard Sullivan, a professor at Kings Health Partners Comprehensive Cancer Centre in London.

Also:

LAGOS: Twenty-one people have died from Lassa fever in Nigeria this month, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control said on Wednesday, in the latest outbreak in Africa's most populous nation.

"Since the beginning of 2018, 80 cases have been classified as: 77 confirmed cases, three probable cases with 21 deaths," the NCDC said on Twitter.

Cases have been reported in 13 of 36 states while 10 health care workers had been affected, it added.



This file picture taken on Oct 25, 2017 shows a boy crying as he is vaccinated against yellow fever, at a public health centre in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Long lines in hospitals, lack of vaccines, closed parks and more than 40 dead in 2018 — an outbreak of yellow fever approaching urban areas of the Brazilian state of Sao Paulo forced extreme measures to contain panic and disease. (AFP)

US officials seek packaging fix for diarrhea-drug abuse

Southeast Asia 'hotspot' for antibiotic abuse

BANGKOK, Jan 31, (Agencies): Overuse and misuse of antibiotics in food is rife in Southeast Asia, a Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) official said on Wednesday, warning of serious risks for people and animals as bacterial infections become more resistant to treatment.

The official from the United Nations' food agency issued the warning on the sidelines of an international meeting in Bangkok focused on antimicrobial resistance (AMR). FAO's Chief Veterinary Officer Juan Lubroth told Reuters in Bangkok that threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) was magnified in places, like Asia's megacities, where there was high population growth and intense food and agriculture production.

"Here in Southeast Asia ... we would consider it a hotspot because of the population growth, urbanization dynamics, the production of food," Lubroth told Reuters.

A report published on Monday by the World Health Organization said that a new global surveillance system had found widespread occurrence of antibiotic resistance among 500,000 people with suspected bacterial infections across 22 countries.

antibiotic resistance among 500,000 people with suspected bacterial infections across 22 countries.

"Some of the world's most common — and potentially most dangerous — infections are proving drug-resistant," Marc Sprenger, director of WHO's Antimicrobial Resistance Secretariat, said in a statement.

A 2016 report by economist Jim O'Neill, commissioned by the British government, projects \$100 trillion in losses by 2050 if nothing is done to reverse the trend, and estimated that the annual toll resulting from AMR will climb to 10 million deaths in the next 35 years.

"Ninety percent of those deaths would be in the developing world, and that is scary," Lubroth said.

He said the FAO advocates educating farmers about the dangers of using antibiotics to promote growth in animals, and stronger enforcement of rules governing food production.

Also:

WASHINGTON: US health regulators on Tuesday asked makers of popular anti-diarrhea drugs to sell their medi-

cations in smaller amounts to make them harder to abuse.

The request comes amid a spike in overdoses from large doses of the over-the-counter drugs, which contain a small amount of an opioid.

The Food and Drug Administration wants manufacturers to package their medications in smaller quantities, such as eight tablets per package. Currently, some generic versions are sold in boxes of up to 200 tablets. The FDA said it also plans to ask online retailers to make it harder to order bulk amounts of the drugs.

The key ingredient in anti-diarrhea medications like Imodium is part of the opioid family, an addictive drug class that includes morphine and oxycodone. At low doses, the medicine, known generically as loperamide, helps control diarrhea. But recent statistics show a rise in abuse of the drug, including massive doses that can cause heart problems and death.

In some reported cases, people attempted to wean themselves off opioids by substituting the anti-diarrhea drugs.

Fifteen deaths were tied to the drug

between 2010 and 2016, researchers reported in a study last year.

HARTFORD, Conn: A white former Connecticut university student accused of smearing body fluids on her black roommate's belongings asked a judge Tuesday to allow her into a probation program that could erase criminal charges from her record.

Brianna Brochu, 18, a former University of Hartford student from Harwinton, applied for accelerated rehabilitation during an appearance in Hartford Superior Court. The program, generally for first-time, nonviolent defendants, allows charges to be erased upon successful completion of a probation period.

A judge set a hearing on the application for March 12.

Brochu is charged with misdemeanor criminal mischief and breach of peace.

West Hartford police say she wrote on Instagram in October about rubbing used tampons on her roommate's backpack and putting her roommate's toothbrush "where the sun doesn't shine."

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What's On

Couch slouch

Quinto to host 'In Search Of'

Stephen Colbert skewers Trump in live 'Late Show'

LOS ANGELES, Jan 31, (RTRS): Stephen Colbert cruised through a live edition of CBS' "The Late Show" on Tuesday, thanks to plenty of material from President Trump's State of the Union address and a lively segment with "2 Dope Queens" hosts Jessica Williams and Phoebe Robinson.

Colbert offered his annotated commentary on highlights from Trump's 90-minute speech to Congress. Among the zingers he delivered at the Ed Sullivan Theater were jabs about brewing scandal over Trump's alleged affair and 2016 payoff of Stormy Daniels.

Colbert invoked his Trump impression after a clip of the President praising "beautiful clean coal." "If we weren't burning coal I might be dating it," he said. To Trump's promise of reducing the cost of prescription drugs, Colbert responded: "Drugs would have really helped me get through his speech." Trump's promise of offering "love and loyalty" to all people in America brought the retort: "If the government isn't that loyal with their love they get \$130,000 to keep quiet about it." Trump touted the recent tax reform legislation that makes the first \$24,000 of income earned by married couples tax-free. "A benefit Trump will be enjoying for at least a few more weeks," Colbert said. Colbert's best line was not about Trump but Rep Joseph Kennedy III (D-Mass), a rising star who delivered the Democratic response to Trump's speech. Or as Colbert referred to the tall redheaded Congressman, "Conan O'Brien."

The live staging of the episode went off without a hitch. During commercial breaks, Colbert conferred with "Late Show" executive producer Chris Licht briefly but mostly moved around the set, hammering it up with members of the audience. In the brief pre-show Q&A, Colbert told the crowd the guest he most wanted to have on the show was Pope Francis. He also showed off his ability to speak French and his bona fides as a "Star Trek" geek.

During the show, "Pod Save America" hosts Tommy Vietor, Jon Favreau, and Jon Lovett were on hand to offer a harsh assessment of Trump's speech and his first year in office. Favreau said Trump appeared to be "reading a hostage statement" and "didn't use his Twitter voice."

Williams and Robinson followed, admitting that neither of them watched Trump's address. "How are two dope queens dealing with the man from Queens," Colbert asked the pair. Robinson replied: "I've been listening to Mary J. Blige non-stop and bathing in cocoa butter."

"We're like, 'Black Panther' is coming out in two weeks. We don't have time for this," Williams said of Trump's speech.

Robinson and Williams dubbed Colbert a "zaddy," or a "hot dude" with attitude — to Colbert's delight.

The show finished out with a mock-serious taped bit from Michael Weatherly, whose Tuesday night CBS drama "Bull" was preempted by the State of the Union. "I speak on behalf of all Tuesday shows in primetime," Weatherly said. "We're preempting what it means to be an American."

Country star Chris Stapleton closed out the telecast with a soulful rendition of "... Prayer," from his Grammy-winning album, "From a Room: Volume 2." (As he waited to go on, Stapleton did his own version of scatting with "Late Show" bandleader Jon Batiste, and he declared himself to be a "zaddy" too.)

Colbert had all of seven seconds to say goodnight after Stapleton's performance. He joked that it was the Conan O'Brien joke that put him over on time. "Somebody was going to make that joke," he said. "And I wanted to beat 'em to it."

□ □ □

Executives at Fox Sports believe they are close to winning the rights to show the National Football League's "Thursday Night Football" for at least the next season, a deal that would illustrate the company's need for live sports at a time when viewership for professional football games are eroding.

The 21st Century Fox unit is bidding aggressively, and executives feel they may complete a deal with the NFL in the next few days, according to a person familiar with the matter. A spokesman for Fox Networks Group, the operating unit that includes Fox Sports, declined to comment. A spokesman for the NFL did not respond to a query seeking comment.

CBS and NBC paid a total of \$450 million last season for the rights to air a combined package of ten games that was split among both networks. The two networks paid the same amount for the rights in the 2016-2017 season as well. CBS and NBC have indicated their interest in airing the games could wane if licensing costs rose without any new benefits, according to people familiar with the situation. Bloomberg News reported Tuesday night that Fox had submitted a bid that would be higher than the \$45 million per game agreed to last season by CBS and NBC.

Whether the NFL had determined how to award rights to live-stream the games digitally was not immediately clear.

21st Century Fox has reason to try to capture the games. The company has proposed to sell the bulk of its assets — including its various TV production studios — to Walt Disney Co. in a deal valued at \$52.4 billion. Fox would keep its Fox broadcast network, Fox Sports and FSI cable network, leaving it more reliant on live sports broadcasts to draw audiences. Fox already airs NFL games on Sunday afternoons.

At the same time, NFL games aren't the bonanza they once were. To be certain, NFL match-ups remain some of TV's most-viewed properties, but their audience has begun to ebb over the last two seasons. Regular-season viewership for NFL games in the most recent season was off 13%, while viewership for the league's playoff games fell between 12% and 20%, according to research from **Michael Nathanson**, an independent media-industry analyst. "The NFL is experiencing a structural decline in viewership, and it is going to be an issue!" Nathanson wrote in a January 29 report.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: History has greenlit the unscripted series "In Search Of" with **Zachary Quinto** attached as host and executive producer, the cable network announced Tuesday.

Inspired by the iconic 1970s series of the same name, the show will examine unexplained phenomena from all over the world. Each episode will follow Quinto as he investigates a different subject within a dynamic theme — such as alien encounters, mysterious creatures, UFO sightings, time travel and artificial intelligence — and searches for the truth to some of the world's greatest mysteries. The original "In Search Of" series aired from 1977-1982 and was hosted by **Rod Serling** and later by **Leonard Nimoy** following Serling's death. Ironically, one of Quinto's most famous roles is playing the younger version of Spock—a character made famous by Nimoy in the new "Star Trek" film franchise.

"I am so excited to be reimagining 'In Search Of' and exploring new questions and phenomena with all of the advancements in science and technology from which we have benefitted in the past forty years since the original series first aired," said Quinto.



Photos from the event

Colourful Character Day at ESF

The English School Fahheel, now celebrating its fiftieth year, recently held The Annual Character Day and Book Week which included a host of activities including a Book Fair.

An outstanding display of colourful and creative outfits once again impressed Lower and Middle School parents.

Cinema

Cinema programme from Thursday 1/2/2018 to Wednesday 7/2/2018

12 Strong

360° 22:10 16:00 (Daily Exc Fri)

Fanar 15:30 16:15 (Fri)

Avenues 14:55

All The Money In The World

360° 12:45, 20:40, 23:15 (Daily Exc Fri)

20:40, 23:15 (Fri)

Avenues 12:15, 21:35, 22:40, (Daily Exc Fri)

21:35, 22:40 (Fri)

Coco

Avenues 16:45

Day Of The Dead: Bloodline

360° 17:40, 23:55 (Daily Exc Fri, Sat)

13:50, 17:40, 23:55 (Fri, Sat)

Avenues 15:00, 19:00, 23:00

Dead Awake

360° 00:50

Fanar 01:10

Avenues 01:15

Den Of Thieves

360° 11:50, 14:00, 14:20,

16:35, 16:55, 19:30,

21:35, 22:05, 00:10,

00:45 (Daily Exc Fri)

14:00, 14:20, 16:35,

16:55, 19:30, 21:35,

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00:15 (Daily Exc Thu, Fri, Sat)

19:15, 21:45, 00:15 (Thu, Fri, Sat)

Fanar 12:15, 14:45, 17:15,

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Muhalab 11:30, 14:00, 16:30,

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Bairaq 13:30, 14:00, 14:20,

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Sharqia 13:30, 14:30, 15:30,

19:10, 20:25, 22:50 (Daily Exc Fri)

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Avenues 18:30 (Fri)

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Bairaq 13:30, 14:45, 18:30 (Fri)

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Marina 11:55, 14:20, 18:15, 19:05, 00:10 (Sat)

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In this file photo, Apple CEO Tim Cook talks about the iPhone 6 and iPhone 6 Plus during an Apple event in San Francisco. US authorities are investigating Apple's slowing of older iPhones, according to published reports. (AP)



Market Movements

31.01.2018

	Change	Closing pts		Change	Closing pts		
AUSTRALIA	- All Ordinaries	+11.20	6,146.50	JAPAN	- Nikkei	-193.68	23,098.29
FRANCE	- CAC 40	+8.15	5,481.93	GERMANY	- DAX	-8.23	3,189.48
EUROPE	- Euro Stoxx 50	+2.54	3,609.29	S. KOREA	- KRX 100	-5.39	5,319.89
HONG KONG	- Hang Seng	+279.98	32,887.27	PHILIPPINES	- All Shares	-69.81	5124.83
				INDIA	- Sensex	-68.71	35,965.02

US investigating iPhone slowing Apple software: report

Apple's move to slow down older iPhones as batteries weaken is under scrutiny by US prosecutors and stock market regulators, according to a report Tuesday by Bloomberg.

The US Department of Justice and the Securities and Exchange Commission are investigating whether Apple broke the law by failing to disclose a software update that made older iPhone models function slower, Bloomberg reported, citing unnamed people familiar with the matter.

It was said to be too early in the probe

to speculate regarding the potential for Apple to be accused of wrongdoing.

The SEC told AFP that it would not comment, and neither Apple nor the DOJ replied to AFP inquiries about the report.

Apple admitted late last year that it intentionally slowed down older models of its iPhones over time.

The company said this was to extend the performance of the phone, which uses less power when running at slower speeds, and was to prevent unexpected shutdowns due to a low battery charge.

It has denied incorporating planned obsolescence and plans to release a software update later this year that will let people turn off the iPhone-slowing feature. In late December the company issued an apology for slowing older models and said it would discount replacement batteries for some handsets.

A French investigation into possible "planned obsolescence" or "fraud" by Apple is being led by antitrust and consumer protection specialists in the French economy ministry. (AFP)

Business

Investors split over bear market in govt bonds

Global funds trim equity holdings by 1.2 pct points in Jan

Mideast funds positive on Saudi, Kuwait

Most negative ratio for UAE stocks since July 2014



Photo shows trading in progress at Boursa Kuwait. The price index ended the month with modest gains.

Market tighter than it appears

Rise in rig count pushes drilling costs up

Boost for company and local industry

BP discovers North Sea oil and gas

LONDON, Jan 31, (AFP): British energy major BP on Wednesday announced oil and gas discoveries in the North Sea, in a boost for the company and local industry.

The discoveries were made in Capercaillie in the central North Sea, and in Achmelvich, west of Shetland, the company said in a statement.

BP fully owns the Capercaillie well, while the Achmelvich well is a partnership between operator BP (52.6 percent), Royal Dutch Shell (28 percent) and US peer Chevron (19.4 percent).

The Capercaillie well was drilled to 3,750 metres (12,303 feet) and found oil and gas. The Achmelvich well was drilled to 2,395 metres (7,857 feet) and located oil.

"These are exciting times for BP in the North Sea as we lay the foundations of a refreshed and revitalised business that we expect to double production to 200,000 barrels a day by 2020 and keep



The logo of energy giant Royal Dutch Shell is pictured at a petrol station in London on Jan 30, 2018. (AFP)

producing beyond 2050," said Mark Thomas, BP North Sea regional president.

"We are hopeful that Capercaillie and Achmelvich may lead to further additions to our North Sea business."

The announcement comes

amid a tough environment for Britain's offshore oil and gas industry, with lobby group Oil & Gas UK claiming that sector employment fell further in 2017 on deep cost-cutting amid Brexit uncertainties and despite rising crude prices.

Strong spending by the government on projects and an injection of public sector deposits has helped Qataris bank to weather the impact of the crisis. QNB estimates around \$177.4 billion of projects will be delivered across oil and gas, transport and construction — including the soccer World Cup in 2022 — between 2018 and 2028.

Commercial Bank aimed to deepen its lending to the government and public sector in 2018, at the same time as continuing to exit from exposure to sectors and borrowers it deemed higher risk, he said.

Loan growth at Commercial Bank would be around 7 to 9 percent in 2018, in line with the market, Abraham added.

That is down from loan growth of 14.6 percent in 2017 and matches that of Qatar National Bank (QNB), the Gulf state's largest bank, reflecting the expectations of analysts that a drop in state spending on new projects should weaken loan growth in 2018.

The small size of the Qatar market has pushed some of the state's lenders to seek overseas expansion.

John Kemp is a Reuters market analyst. The views expressed are his own.

— Editor

By John Kemp

US shale producers are facing rising costs for everything from drilling rigs to pressure pumping equipment and labour as the cyclical expansion in oil prices and drilling matures.

The cost of drilling oil and gas wells has increased significantly over the last year, according to the latest provisional estimates from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Drilling costs have increased by more than 10 percent since hitting a cyclical low in November 2016, though they are still 27 percent below the cyclical peak set in March 2014.

Changes in drilling costs tend to follow changes in the number of rigs employed with a lag of around 1-2 months.

The oil rig count itself tends to follow changes in the price of benchmark US crude futures (WTI) with a lag of 4 months.

In the current slump, however, drilling costs have recovered more slowly than normal as the market has absorbed a huge number of idled rigs.

US crude prices hit a cyclical low in February 2016, the rig count reached its nadir in May 2016, and drilling costs fell to their lowest point in November 2016.

Since then, drilling costs have been on a gradual upswing as the number of rigs drilling for oil and gas has more than doubled from 404 in May 2016 to 947 in January 2018.

The number of active rigs is still less than half its peak before the oil prices started slumping in the second half of 2014. But the rig market is tighter than it appears because many older rigs have been scrapped, cannibalised for spare parts, or are simply unsuitable for drilling the very long wells now favoured by crude producers.

Producers increasingly favour new high-powered horizontal rigs that can drill ultra-long laterals as quickly as possible, so many of the older, lower-powered vertical or directional rigs are of marginal value.

In other parts of the service sector, especially pressure pumping, shortages of equipment and trained crews are even more acute, and prices have been rising even faster. During the depths of the downturn in 2015 and 2016, many service companies offered deeply discounted fixed-price contracts for 2016 and 2017 to win business. (RTRS)

Commercial Bank seeks to benefit from Qatar's Turkish ties

Qatar c.bank's reserves, liquidity rise in December

benefit from closer political ties, its chief executive said.

Ankara has emerged as a strong ally as Qatar faces off against Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt in a regional diplomatic and commercial rift.

And Qatari lenders have sought to diversify funding sources since June when the four Arab countries boycotted Qatar, alleging it finances terrorism, something it denies.

"The very close political and economic relationship between Qatar and Turkey will be beneficial for us," Joseph Abraham told reporters, adding that the bank was adding more capital and focus

in the market as part of a new strategic plan for Turkey.

Commercial Bank had brought in a new management team and two new board directors to Alternatifbank, its 100 percent-owned Turkish subsidiary, in a bid to raise profitability, he said.

Loan growth at Commercial Bank would be around 7 to 9 percent in 2018, in line with the market, Abraham added.

That is down from loan growth of 14.6 percent in 2017 and matches that of Qatar National Bank (QNB), the Gulf state's largest bank, reflecting the expectations of analysts that a drop in state spending on new projects should weaken loan growth in 2018.

The small size of the Qatar market has pushed some of the state's lenders to seek overseas expansion.

DUBAI, Jan 31, (RTRS): Middle East fund managers expect to pump more money into Saudi Arabian equities in coming months but they are on balance negative towards several other major Gulf bourses, a Reuters poll showed on Wednesday.

The monthly poll of 13 leading regional fund managers, conducted in the past week, found 69 percent expect to raise allocations to Saudi Arabia within a regional equities portfolio over the next three months, and none to cut allocations.

That is the most positive balance towards Saudi Arabia since September 2013, the month in which the poll was launched, when the ratio was 75 percent to zero. In last month's poll, 69 percent expected to raise Saudi allocations and 8 percent to cut them.

"In the first quarter, the rotation into Saudi Arabia could further strengthen," said Vrajesh Bhandari, portfolio manager at Dubai's Al Mal Capital.

He and other fund managers cited expectations that Saudi Arabia will join emerging market equity indexes, which would attract billions of dollars of fresh money to the country.

MSCI will announce its decision this June on whether to label Saudi Arabia an emerging market, while FTSE will make a decision in March. Actual inclusion in the indexes would only occur months later — in May 2019, in the case of MSCI — but positive decisions could buoy the market immediately.

Many funds expect stronger economic growth in Saudi Arabia this year because of higher state spending, while the planned listing of national oil giant Saudi Aramco in Riyadh during the second half of 2018 is likely to attract money.

The poll confirmed that Saudi Arabia's crackdown on corruption, which was launched in November and detained well over 100 people at one stage, has done little to hurt the interest of portfolio investors in the country, even as it shook the political and business elite.

"The last few months were turbulent but people are looking towards catalysts such as MSCI and FTSE inclusion, and the Aramco IPO," said another fund manager, adding that spending plans in the government's 2018 budget were positive.

Bhandari said of Al Mal's Saudi strategy: "We are more bullish on banks and insurance, but believe consumer discretionary and industrials could struggle."

Despite stronger economic growth this year, Saudi consumer demand may be restrained by this month's hike in gasoline prices and the introduction of a 5 percent value-added tax.

Fund managers are much less positive on stock markets in the United Arab Emirates, where 8 percent expect to raise equity allocations and 38 percent to reduce them — the most negative ratio for the UAE since July 2014. In last month's poll, the balance was slightly positive. But fund managers have been disappointed by low trading volumes in recent months, while slumping real estate prices in Dubai and Abu Dhabi have weighed on markets.

Some managers see the risk of outflows of money to Saudi Arabia this year because of the Aramco listing, which could further hurt UAE trading volumes.

Managers have also turned slightly negative on balance towards Qatari equities, with 15 percent expecting to raise allocations and 23 percent expecting to reduce them.

Qatar's stock market rose sharply in the past two months in anticipation of annual dividend announcements, and as it became clear that an embargo imposed on Doha by other Arab states last June was doing less damage to the economy than feared. But the market has now almost regained its pre-embargo level.

French supermarket boss hauled in over Nutella frenzy

The French government has implored supermarkets to refrain from the kind of promotion deals that have led to in-store scuffles over cut-price jars of Nutella, a minister said Wednesday.

Videos of French shoppers jostling as they tried to grab heavily discounted tubs of the chocolate spread in Intermarche stores have gone viral over the past week.

"I met with the director of In-

termarche yesterday," Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire said, as his government prepared to unveil a bill later Wednesday that will tighten rules on supermarket promotions.

"I told him that this must be stopped — we can't have scenes like this every few days in France," Le Maire told RTL radio.

Intermarche sparked the shopping frenzy last Thursday when it slashed the price of a 950-

gram (2-pound) pot of Nutella — a favoured breakfast spread in France — from 4.50 euros (\$5.60) to 1.41 euros.

The three-day promotion prompted shoving and even full-blown fights in several stores, with one worker likening the scenes to "an orgy".

Intermarche apologised to customers, but it has since continued with aggressive discounts on coffee and nappies. (AFP)

US Treasury says will hit govt debt limit Feb 28

The US government has enough cash to pay its bills through Feb 28 without hitting the debt limit, nearly a month later than previously estimated, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said. In a letter to congressional leaders dated Tuesday, Mnuchin said Treasury will try to further extend the deadline with accounting maneuvers, like suspending investments in employee pension funds.

He previously estimated the

government's borrowing authority would run out Wednesday. "I respectfully urge Congress to protect the full faith and credit of the United States by acting to increase the statutory debt limit as soon as possible," Mnuchin said.

Congress had suspended the debt limit through Dec 8, but will need to either suspend or raise the ceiling from the current level of more than \$20 trillion before Treasury runs out of funds to

keep the government operating.

Treasury in November began implementing the bookkeeping moves as part of the effort to avoid defaulting on the US debt, which could disrupt financial markets. Because the federal government traditionally runs a budget deficit, it has no choice but to borrow to finance government operations, including salaries, retirement benefits, social spending and other expenses approved by Congress. (AFP)

Firm wins 'Best Saudi Equity Fund' award

Global awarded 'Best Kuwait Asset Manager' by MENA Fund Manager

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: Global Investment House (Global), a regional Asset Management and Investment Banking firm headquartered in Kuwait with offices in major capital markets in the MENA region, was awarded "Best Asset Manager in Kuwait" and "Best Saudi Equity Fund" by the "MENA Fund Managers Performance Awards".

The awards were presented in an event held on Tuesday 30 January 2018 in Dubai and attended by professionals from the regional investment and asset management industry. Bader Al-Ghanim, Executive Vice-President and Head of MENA Asset Management at Global received the awards.

The MENA Asset Management team was named "Best Kuwait Asset Manager", thanks to the consistent performance of the managed funds and portfolios as a result of the long-term strategy adopted that focuses on stocks with potential operational growth and good fundamentals while disregards speculative ones.

On the other hand, Global Saudi Equity Fund, the second largest fund in the Kingdom with assets under management of SAR 502 million (USD 134 million), was named "Best Saudi Equity Fund". The fund has outperformed the respec-



Global Investment House representatives receiving the award.

tive benchmark Tadawul All Shares Index ("TASI") reporting 120.8% since inception (TASI: 50.9%) and 5.8% in 2017 (TASI: 0.2%).

Al-Ghanim said, "We are delighted

that MENA Fund Manager recognized our achieved and consistent performance on various products. We were able to accomplish these results by consistently placing our

clients' interests at the forefront and continuously seeking to offer optimum quality products and services."

"Our stock selection processes

along with the investment strategy didn't only result in outperforming the funds we manage their respective benchmarks last year, but also on longer periods; the past two years, three years as well as since inception," he added.

Last December, the asset management team at Global issued their outlook on the GCC equity markets for the year 2018 with a generally optimistic view ranging from slightly negative to moderately bullish across the board supported by more accommodative fiscal policies and reasonable valuations.

The teams' outlook on Kuwait was upgraded from neutral last year to positive for 2018. Although Kuwait lacks any strong themes, the market can deliver positive returns driven by a sustained government spending, strong fiscal position due to lower breakeven oil prices, reasonable valuations (for selective large and mid-cap companies) and potential FTSE flows following the upgrade in September 2017.

While the team was neutral to slightly positive on Saudi in 2017, it turned more bullish on the kingdom for 2018 on the back of expansionary budget — underpinned by higher oil and non-oil revenues — and potential index inclusion by FTSE and



MSCI.

Al-Ghanim concluded by thanking the MENA asset management teams in Kuwait and Saudi for their efforts and hard work which have achieved very positive results, with all managed funds outperforming their respective benchmarks.

It is worth noting that over a 3 years and 5 years window, the Fund performance was -7.2% and 37.5% respectively compared to -13.3% and 6.3% respectively for TASI (The benchmark returns do not reflect dividends for the respective periods).



This file photo shows dollar bills in New York. A survey by Fidelity Investments, which looked at more than 3,000 working households that have started saving for retirement, says that Americans' retirement savings are in the best shape they've been in more than a decade. (AP)

Savings rate is now 8.8 pct

US retirement score rises

NEW YORK, Jan 31, (AP): Americans' retirement savings are in the best shape they've been in more than a decade. So says a survey by Fidelity Investments, which looked at more than 3,000 working households that have started saving for retirement.

After tallying up how much they're saving in their 401(k) accounts, their expected Social Security benefits and other assets, Fidelity said that the typical saver is on track to have 80 percent of the income they'll need to cover retirement costs. That's the highest score since Fidelity's surveys began in 2005, when it was at 62 percent.

Much of the improvement is due to workers saving more of their pay each year. The typical savings rate is now 8.8 percent, more than double the 3.6 percent rate in 2006. That, though, is still less than the 15 percent of pay that Fidelity and other advisers suggest, including whatever contributions employers make through matching programs.

The surging stock market, which has more than quadrupled since early

US private payrolls growth maintains brisk pace in Jan

Labor costs rise in fourth quarter

WASHINGTON, Jan 31, (Agencies): US private sector payrolls rose at a brisk pace in January as hiring increased across the board despite unseasonably cold weather, pointing to sustained labor market strength at the start of the year.

Other data on Wednesday showed a solid increase in labor costs in the fourth quarter. Growth in compensation is expected to accelerate as the tightening labor market forces employers to raise wages to retain and attract workers.

Federal Reserve officials were scheduled to resume a two-day meeting on Wednesday. The US central bank is expected to leave interest rates unchanged at the end of the meeting. The Fed has forecast three rate hikes this year. It increased borrowing costs three times in 2017.

The ADP national employment report showed private sector employment rose by 234,000 jobs in January, beating economists' expectations for an increase of only 185,000. December's payrolls count was revised down to 242,000 from 250,000.

The ADP report, which is jointly produced with Moody's Analytics, was published ahead of the release on Friday of the government's comprehensive employment data for

January.

According to a Reuters survey of economists, nonfarm payrolls probably rose by 180,000 jobs in January after increasing 148,000 in December. The unemployment rate is forecast unchanged at 4.1 percent.

"The job market juggernaut marches on," said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics in West Chester Pennsylvania. "Given the strong January job gain, 2018 is on track to be the eighth consecutive year in which the economy creates over 2 million jobs."

US financial markets were little moved by the data.

In a separate report the Labor Department said the Employment Cost Index, the broadest measure of labor costs, increased 0.6 percent in the fourth quarter after an unrevised 0.7 percent rise in the third quarter. That lifted the year-on-year rate of increase to 2.6 percent, the largest increase since the first quarter of 2015, from 2.5 percent in the third quarter.

Wages and salaries, which account for 70 percent of employment costs, rose 0.5 percent in the fourth quarter after advancing 0.7 percent in the prior period. Wages and salaries were up 2.5 percent in the 12 months through December. That followed a similar gain in the year to September.

Wage growth is expected to get a boost from a strong labor market, which is forecast to hit full employment this year. The unemployment

rate is at a 17-year low of 4.1 percent and economists expect it to drop to 3.5 percent by the end of 2018.

A \$1.5 trillion tax cut package pushed through by the Trump administration and the Republican-controlled US Congress in December is also expected to bolster compensation growth. The tax cut has resulted in some companies either paying out one-time bonuses or raising wages for employees.

Companies like Starbucks Corp and FedEx Corp have announced they will use some of the savings from the tax cut to boost wages for workers.

The ECI is widely viewed by policymakers and economists as one of the better measures of labor market slack. It is also considered a better predictor of core inflation. Economists say labor costs need to rise by at least 3 percent to push inflation closer to the US central bank's 2 percent inflation target. Labor costs increased 2.5 percent in the year to September.

Private sector wages and salaries rose 0.6 percent in the fourth quarter. They were up 2.8 percent in the 12 months through December, the biggest increase since the first quarter of 2015. That followed a 2.6 percent gain in the year to September.

Benefits for all workers increased 0.5 percent in the October-December quarter after rising 0.8 percent in the third quarter. They were up 2.5 percent in the 12 months through December after rising 2.4 percent in the year to September.

Meanwhile, the pace of Americans signing contracts to buy homes increased for a third straight month in December, raising an index of pending home sales by 0.5 percent.

The National Association of Realtors said Wednesday that its index of pending sales reached 110.1, up from a revised 109.6 in November. The index is now at its highest level since registering 111.3 in March.

More Americans are looking for homes as the economy has improved, though a shrinking supply of properties on the market has made the hunt difficult and driven up prices.

Low borrowing costs have somewhat offset the rise in home prices. But mortgage giant Freddie Mac said last week that the average rate on a 30-year fixed mortgage rose for a third straight week to 4.15 percent. That's the highest average rate since March.

The number of signed contracts rose in the South and West in December but declined in the Northeast and Midwest. A 5.1 percent decline in the Northeast was offset by a 2.6 percent gain in the South and a 1.5 percent increase in the West. Pending sales in the Midwest declined slightly by 0.3 percent.

Pending sales contracts are a barometer of future purchases. Sales typically follow a month or two after a signed contract.

Europe's big banks to face tougher stress tests in 2018

FRANKFURT AM MAIN, Jan 31, (AP): Europe's biggest banks will face the most stringent tests yet of their resilience against economic shocks this year, the European Banking Authority (EBA) regulator said Wednesday.

Some 48 institutions representing 70 percent of European banking sector assets will be put through their paces in the exercise, conducted with technical assistance from the eurozone's top supervisor, the European Central Bank (ECB).

Financial firms will be trialled on four different types of risks that regulators have identified as the most dangerous to financial stability in Europe.

The biggest risk is a so-called "confidence shock", a speculative scenario that could see major political uncertainty push financial market investors to sharply increase the "risk premium" they demand when lending money.

Other tests will probe the impact of renewed doubts about government and corporate debt sustainability and the risks to the whole financial sector from a shortage of liquidity in the "non-bank" financial world of investment firms, insurance companies and others.

Healthcare's 3 Amigos? The big names behind a new push

NEW YORK, Jan 31, (AP): Three guys walk into a bar. They're Warren Buffett, Amazon.com's Jeff Bezos and JPMorgan Chase's Jamie Dimon. They decide to transform the American healthcare system.

That's probably not how these three men decided to form a new company to address healthcare costs for their US employees, and possibly for many more Americans. The three companies, with a combined market cap of \$1.62 trillion, did not provide

details of how the collaboration between their CEOs came about. And while their announcement Tuesday didn't include many specifics, based on their very different business backgrounds it's possible to see what each might bring to the table.

Bezos, 54, runs one of the world's biggest retail operations and by some measurement he's now the wealthiest person on the planet. Amazon grew from a book retailer into one of the world's most valuable companies in

part because it's extremely skilled in distributing products. It's long been willing to lose money in order to offer customers lower prices than its competitors can bear — and in the process gain a loyal customer base. That's what millions of Prime members love about it.

Amazon has never been consistent at turning profits because of its focus on sales growth. That's what many investors fear about it. Investors in healthcare have long thought Ama-

zon was going to get into that field and force companies that make and distribute medications or medical devices to drastically lower their prices.

When the three companies said they want to create a partnership "free from profit-making incentives and constraints," Amazon would seem to be the blueprint.

By contrast, few associate fear with Buffett, the 87-year-old "Oracle of Omaha." He's respected for his 70 years of successful investing, beloved by many for giving billions to charity — he has said he plans to give away at least half his fortune — and appreciated for a common touch that includes a prodigious Coca-Cola habit and a love of junk food, along with his personal frugality. But most significant in this context is that his company, Berkshire Hathaway, owns a number of insurers including GEICO. That means he brings a lot of experience in evaluating and insuring risks.

And he's a longtime critic of the healthcare system. Tuesday was not the first time Buffett had talked about growing healthcare costs as a "tapeworm" that harms the growth of the American economy.



This combination of pictures created on Jan 30, 2018 shows (left to right), file photos of Chairman and CEO of Berkshire Hathaway Warren Buffett in Washington, DC, on June 14, 2016; Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos in Washington, DC, on Dec 14, 2017; and JP Morgan Chase's Chairman and CEO Jamie Dimon in Paris on July 11, 2017. (AFP)

Lloyds Bank chairman wants Britain to set own financial rules

Britain must have a significant say in setting its own financial rules after it leaves the European Union, Lloyds Banking Group Chairman Norman Blackwell said on Wednesday.

"We couldn't allow our financial services to be dictated to without having a say in how those regulations work," Blackwell told a conference on Brexit and financial services in London.

The EU and Britain are due to

begin talks on the future shape of their trading relations, including how much access banks, insurers and asset managers in the City of London financial district will have to the EU market after Brexit.

Britain's financial sector has proposed a "mutual recognition" pact whereby Britain and the EU accept the broad thrust of each other's rules to allow two-way market access.

If access from Europe to Lon-

don as a global centre of liquidity is blocked, the result will be fragmentation of markets with the main cost falling on European companies that have less ready access to global markets, Blackwell said.

The current EU system of access for financial services firms is based on "equivalence", whereby the bloc grants access if a foreign bank or insurer's home rules are aligned with the EU's.

This forces countries like Switzerland to copy the bloc's standards in return for market access.

Mark Hoban, the former City minister who chaired a panel that wrote the "mutual recognition" proposal, said it could be incorporated into a broader, bespoke free trade agreement.

"It's pretty clear that the basis we are ending up with is a free trade agreement with additions to it," Blackwell agreed. (RTRS)

shares in Capita plunge

Shares in troubled British financial services group Capita plunged more than 40 percent in value on Wednesday after the indebted outsourcing firm warned over future profits.

Analysts said the group risked ending up the same way as construction company Carillion, which shut earlier this month with a mountain of debts. Like Capita, Carillion did much of its outsourcing for the UK government.

"Today, Capita is too complex, it is driven by a short-term focus and lacks operational discipline and financial flexibility," chief executive Jonathan Lewis, who started in the role just two months ago, said in a statement Wednesday.

Around 1050 GMT in London, Capita shares traded down 41.35 percent at 204 pence, compared with the closing value on Tuesday. (AFP)

Eurozone inflation falls despite buoyant economy

Unemployment holds at 9-year low

LONDON, Jan 31, (AP): The eurozone economy may be enjoying its best growth in a decade and seeing unemployment drop sharply, but there are few signs that is fueling the inflation that the European Central Bank is looking for.

In fact, figures Wednesday from the European Union's statistics agency showed annual consumer price inflation across the 19-country bloc fell to 1.3 percent in January from the previous month's 1.4 percent.

The January rate is the lowest since July and suggests the buoyant euro has weighed on prices by lowering import costs. For a variety of reasons, including the eurozone's strong growth, the euro has been hugely in demand. On Wednesday, it was up 0.4 percent at \$1.2448, just shy of the recently struck three-year high near \$1.25.

Inflation has been below the European Central Bank's target of just under 2 percent for most of the past few years. While low inflation is good for consumers as it allows their income to go further, it is a sign that workers have little power in getting the wage increases they are striving for from firms that are still operating on relatively tight margins.

That is evident in the fact that the core inflation rate, which strips out potentially volatile items like food and energy, remains stubbornly below the

headline rate, though it did increase modestly in January to 1 percent from 0.9 percent.

The low inflation backdrop is the main reason why the ECB has yet to follow its peers such as the US Federal Reserve or the Bank of England in reversing some of its crisis-era stimulus measures — the main interest rate remains at zero while the bank's hefty bond-buying program continues to keep a lid on borrowing rates in the markets.

Last week, ECB President Mario Draghi gave few further hints about whether the bank will extend past September its current stimulus program, which involves the purchase of 30 billion euros (\$36 billion) of bonds per month. The purpose of the purchases is to pump newly created money into the economy to raise inflation and growth in the wake of the debt crisis that has afflicted the eurozone for years.

With the crisis abating, the eurozone is growing strongly — figures Tuesday showed that the bloc expanded by 2.5 percent in 2017, its highest rate for a decade.

The hope, certainly among policymakers at the central bank, is that the growth will eventually boost inflation as consumers spend more and wage increases accelerate. Once inflation is back at target and growth remains firm, the ECB is expected to start to reverse course.

Draghi has said that the recent "remarkable" falls in unemployment will soon begin to see wages rise strongly and offset any legacy of the crisis, which has led many unions across the bloc to focus more on keeping jobs than

on securing higher pay.

"Some recovery in wage growth seems imminent; German unions are pushing for higher wage increases in collective bargaining negotiations for example, but it will likely take at least until 2019 until wage growth is back at

pre-crisis levels," said Bert Colijn, senior eurozone economist at ING.

Separate figures released Wednesday from Eurostat showed the eurozone's unemployment fell a further 134,000 in December but that the jobless rate held steady at a near nine-year low of 8.7 percent. Though unemployment has been falling consistently across the bloc for the past few years — evidence that the recovery is broad-based — it's still double the rate in the US and that's acting as a break on wage rises.

Station F turning country image

Startup hub reflects Macron's 'changing' French economy

PARIS, Jan 31, (AP): For a glimpse at President Emmanuel Macron's vision for the new French economy, look no farther than Station F.

Entrepreneurs don virtual reality goggles and share ideas with business angels in this old Paris train station-turned-startup incubator.

The buzzing business center founded by telecom tycoon Xavier Niel hosts over 3,500 people, all hoping to see some of the 1,000 startups based here bloom into a global firm capable of competing with Silicon Valley behemoths.

It's part of what Macron hopes is a fundamental shift in the French economy, which confirmed this week that it's back on the upswing after years of stagnation.

Niel, who revolutionized telecoms in France in the early 2000s, says young startup entrepreneurs look at Macron's meteoric rise to the presidency and think: "You can be president when you are 39 years old. You were nobody 2 or 3 years ago ... can't I create the biggest startup in the world by starting now? A guy can become the French president so can't I create something big, alone, when I'm 25 or 30 years old?"

With the support of Mayor Anne Hidalgo and then-President Francois Hollande, Niel founded Station F in 2017 to bring together young and eager startup managers, financial players and key public institutions in an effort to develop France's budding tech ecosystem.

The vast space hums with energy and electronic devices, as its mostly youthful workers take breaks around multi-colored sofas, or bounce ideas off each other in shared meeting rooms.

Station F includes people from multiple countries, and Niel is notably keen to attract talented people

looking to leave London as Brexit looms.

"We need to create — we need these startups to build tomorrow's big companies and to do that we need to attract talents from as many places as possible," Niel, CEO of Iliad and founder of coding school 42, told The Associated Press.

Among entrepreneurs thriving off Station F's atmosphere is Gildas Dussauze, who founded virtual reality social platform VirtuoZ just under three years ago and spends most of his waking hours in search of clients and cash to finally start paying his staff of six.

"The combination of Station F and Macron, yes, it has turned France's image upside down, in a good way. It's an image of audacity, youth, enthusiasm and that's good," he told The AP.

Not everything is perfect. Dussauze said France's banking bureaucracy "is not in sync with startups."

But Station F includes representatives from French institutions like the public postal service La Poste and employment office Pole Emploi, in an effort to make startups a more integral part of the national economy.

Dussauze says they are "very dynamic and have completely changed the way they talk to us and have adapted to our needs."

Macron's election last May, his relentless public relations campaign to put France back onto the world map of innovation and a changing business environment have fueled a quick shift in the country's image.

France's economy grew 1.9 percent in 2017, its highest level since 2011, according to figures released Tuesday. That's partly because of Macron but also because of an improving climate Europe-wide and measures taken under his predecessor.

SMMT calls for swift agreement on Brexit transition period

Investment in UK auto sector plunges by a third

LONDON, Jan 31, (AFP): Investment in the British automotive industry fell by a third in 2017, its trade association said Wednesday as it called for a swift agreement on the Brexit transition period.

The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders said that only £1.1 billion (\$1.55 billion, 1.25 billion euros) of investment earmarked for vehicle and supply chain manufacturing was publicly announced last year.

The figure is down 33.7 percent from £1.66 billion in 2016. It stood at £2.5 billion in 2015.

"We urgently need clarity on the transitional arrangements for Brexit," SMMT chief executive Mike Hawes said in a press conference.

Britain is due to leave the European Union at the end of March 2019.

London and Brussels are yet to sort out the details of a transition period that could last until the start of 2021, intended to allow business time to adjust to whatever trading arrangements apply once the UK leaves the bloc.

"For the transition, we must see business as usual — so staying in the single market, staying in the customs union," said Hawes.

Due to the uncertainties on the transition and the future trade relationship, "there is a general climate of hesitancy ... and its political and economic impact is affecting consumer and business confidence".

The mood weighed on new car sales in Britain in 2017.

They fell for the first time in six years, on plummeting demand for diesel-powered vehicles and as Brexit-fuelled inflation hit spending.

Total sales dropped 5.7 percent to 2.54 million vehicles, the first annual drop since 2011 — as consumers ditched diesel cars for those seen as

more environmentally friendly, according to the SMMT.

A similar sales drop is expected in 2018, said Hawes.

As a result, production dropped by three percent in 2017, to 1.67 million cars. Production for export declined by 1.1 percent, while in Britain, demand declined by 9.8 percent.

The UK car industry employs 169,000 people in manufacturing alone and 814,000 across the wider industry, accounting for 13 percent of total UK

export goods, says the SMMT.

The dependence on exports — at 80 percent of total production, with more than half going to the rest of the EU — makes it all the more imperative, according to the SMMT, to strike a swift agreement between London and Brussels.

A government spokesman said: "The UK's automotive industry remains a great British success story and global demand for UK designed, engineered and manufactured cars and engines remains strong."

Unemployment rate climbs to 5.8% in Jan

German govt raises 2018 growth forecast to 2.4%

German bosses ask courts to block metalworkers' strikes

FRANKFURT AM MAIN, Jan 31, (AFP): German employers' organisations have turned to the courts to block metalworkers' strikes for higher pay and more generous conditions, they said Wednesday, as thousands of union members downed tools.

Regional industry federations in Bavaria, Berlin, Brandenburg and Saxony states filed requests to forbid strikes by union IG Metall and grant them compensation Wednesday morning, with others expected to follow suit, a spokesman for nationwide industry group Gesamtmetall said.

"This unnecessary escalation is coming from IG Metall alone. We reject it absolutely and warn them we will claim compensation," said Bertram Brossardt, director of Bavarian metalworking employers' federation VBM.

The Federal Labor Agency said the unadjusted jobless rate climbed from 5.3 percent in December, with the number of unemployed rising by 185,000 to 2.57 million. However, that figure was 207,000 lower than a year earlier.

in 24-hour "warning strikes" from Wednesday, after talks with bosses broke down on Saturday.

Their ambitious aim for a 6.0-percent pay rise for the sector's 3.9 million workers is unremarkable as a tough starting position in wage talks.

But employers say the worker representatives' demand for a right to switch to a 28-hour week for up to two years, with a top-up in pay for some affected employees, could be illegal — making strikes to achieve it illegal in turn.

Such a system would discriminate against workers who have previously chosen to go part-time without such benefits, they argue.

Bosses also say the warning strikes, a new weapon in unions' arsenal, do not meet the democratic standards required by law.

Courts will not decide in time to stop the remaining strikes planned

this week.

"This round of wage talks can't be solved by legal means," IG Metall chief Joerg Hofmann said, adding that the union would "not be deterred by legal distractions".

"Now more than ever we will carry out our day-long warning strikes to the end," he continued.

Unions are determined to press their demands after years of "wage moderation" in the wake of the financial crisis.

A shortage of skilled workers at the same time as businesses work ever closer to capacity in a strong economy is playing into their hands.

Meanwhile, employers fear financial losses from the walkouts, which Cologne-based think tank IW estimated at 62 million euros (\$77 million) per day if 50,000 workers were to down tools.



In this file photo, French telecom tycoon Xavier Niel, (right), speaks with French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris, at the world's biggest startup incubator Station F, during its inauguration. For a glimpse at Macron's vision for the new French economy, look no farther than Station F. Entrepreneurs don virtual reality goggles and share ideas with business angels in this old Paris train station-turned-startup incubator. (AP)

Fujifilm to cut 10,000 jobs

Japanese technology firm Fujifilm on Wednesday announced 10,000 job cuts by March 2020 at its Fuji Xerox subsidiary, which it said was facing an "increasingly severe" market environment.

In a major shake-up, Fujifilm also announced it would be combining Fuji Xerox with US giant Xerox, bringing both companies under its umbrella to create what it said was the world's largest "document solutions company" by revenue. As part of a cost-cutting package that it hopes will save 50 billion yen (\$460 million), Fujifilm announced "personnel reductions of 10,000 people domestically and overseas" at Fuji Xerox. (AFP)

Name: Kuwait Sharia

Compatible Indices
Kuwait Sharia Compatible Index - Composite
Kuwait Sharia Compatible Index - Active
Kuwait Sharia Compatible Index - Banking Sector
Kuwait Sharia Compatible Index - Investment Sector
Kuwait Sharia Compatible Index - Insurance Sector
Kuwait Sharia Compatible Index - Real Estate Sector
Kuwait Sharia Compatible Index - Industrial Sector
Kuwait Sharia Compatible Index - Services Sector
Kuwait Sharia Compatible Index - Food Sector
Kuwait Sharia Compatible Index - Islamic Sector
Kuwait Sharia Compatible Index - Non-Kuwaiti Sector

Providers: Al Madar Finance & Investment Co.

Description: Index of Sharia compatible companies traded on the KSE

Website: www.almadar-fi.com

Index name	Bloomberg ticker	Today's value as of	Today's closing value	Prev closing value	% change	1-week change	3-month change	YTD change	12-month change	24-month change
Kuwait Sharia Compatible Index - Composite	AMIC	January 31, 2018	171.93	173.17	-0.72%	-1.21%	-1.68%	2.69%	-9.56%	17.72%
Kuwait Sharia Compatible Index - Active	AMIC	January 31, 2018	166.13	167.44	-0.78%	-1.42%	-1.83%	2.61%	-8.08%	16.66%
Kuwait Sharia Compatible Index - Banking Sector	AMIC	January 31, 2018	78.46	79.08	-0.78%	-4.99%	-5.51%	5.52%	-29.82%	21.95%
Kuwait Sharia Compatible Index - Investment Sector	AMIC	January 31, 2018	49.44	49.85	-0.43%	-0.7%	-6.1%	3.37%	-27.01%	10.49%
Kuwait Sharia Compatible Index - Insurance Sector	AMIC	January 31, 2018	20.45	20.45	0.00%	0.0%	7.39%	-3.49%	-5.7%	23.80%
Kuwait Sharia Compatible Index - Real Estate Sector	AMIC	January 31, 2018	50.29	50.03	0.52%	1.47%	1.67%	6.03%	-11.28%	6.69%
Kuwait Sharia Compatible Index - Industrial Sector	AMIC	January 31, 2018	149.20	149.67	0.25%	-1.09%	3.05%	2.4%	-3.04%	20.82%
Kuwait Sharia Compatible Index - Services Sector	AMIC	January 31, 2018	223.43	224.45	0.45%	-0.82%	-0.14%	2.04%	-0.75%	35.43%
Kuwait Sharia Compatible Index - Food Sector	AMIC	January 31, 2018	165.01	165.01	0.00%	1.34%	-36.18%	-3.71%	-57.12%	-37.81%
Kuwait Sharia Compatible Index - Islamic Sector	AMIC	January 31, 2018	138.32	139.88	-1.11%	-1.80%	0.04%	2.86%	-7.26%	18.89%
Kuwait Sharia Compatible Index - Non-Kuwaiti Sector	AMIC	January 31, 2018	404.44	420.86	-3.90%	-1.65%	2.66%	5.65%	-29.66%	61.91%
Kuwait Stock Exchange Index - Price S&P 500	KWSEIDX	January 31, 2018	6,687.81	6,664.03	0.36%	0.78%	2.13%	4.37%	-2.11%	30.76%
DJ Islamic Index	SPX DJM	January 30, 2018	2,822.43	2,853.53	-1.09%	-0.59%	9.42%	5.02%	23.74%	45.47%
			3,835.90	3,868.12	-0.83%	-0.91%	8.37%	5.47%	28.66%	45.02%

Pollution war bites

BEIJING, Jan 31, (RTRS): Growth in China's manufacturing sector slowed more than expected in January to an 8-month low in the face of a cooling property market and tighter pollution rules that have curtailed factory output.

The data, which gives global investors their first look at business conditions in China at the start of 2018, reinforced the view that the economy is beginning to gradually lose steam after growing by a better-than-expected 6.9 percent last year.

The official Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) released on Wednesday edged lower to 51.3 in January, compared with 51.6 in December.

But it remained comfortably above the 50-point mark that separates growth from contraction on a monthly basis.

Analysts surveyed by Reuters had forecast the headline number would ease slightly to 51.5.

Indexes for output, total new orders and imports all showed more moderate expansion in January compared with last month, while export orders fell marginally. The new export order index dropped to 49.5, 2.4 percentage point lower than December's reading.

However, the overall factory reading still appeared relatively solid, marking the 19th straight month of expansion and reinforcing expectations that any slowdown in the economy would be gradual.

Economists polled by Reuters are pencilling in growth of 6.5 percent this year.

A separate PMI on the steel sector rose to 50.9 in January from 50.2 in December.

In another sign of broader economic resilience, a sister survey showed activity in China's service sector accelerated to a four-month high in January. The official non-manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose to 55.3 from 55 in December.

The services sector accounts for over half of China's economy, with rising wages giving Chinese consumers more spending power.

A buoyant services industry is welcome news for the policymakers who are counting on growth in services and consumption to rebalance their economic growth model from its heavy reliance on investment and exports.

Boosted by government infrastructure spending, a resilient property market and unexpected strength in exports, China's manufacturing and industrial firms were a major driver behind the solid economic growth last year.

But analysts say increasing trade frictions with the United States could cloud the outlook for exporters in the world's second-largest economy.



In this file photo, a woman works in a textile factory in Jiangyin in eastern China's Jiangsu Province. Chinese manufacturing started the year off at a slower pace as factory activity eased to its weakest in eight months on softer demand, especially for exports, according to an official index released on Jan 31, 2018.

The official purchasing manager's index for January slipped to 51.3, down from December's 51.6, though it remains above the 50-point mark signifying expansion on the index 100-point scale. (AP)

Figures beat market expectations**Japan factory output up December: data****Trump vows to protect US IP, but without 'directly blaming' China**

WASHINGTON, Jan 31, (RTRS): US President Donald Trump vowed on Tuesday to protect American intellectual property, but made little mention of China, which his administration has accused of trade abuses, in his first State of the Union speech to Congress.

Trump had been expected to deliver strong warnings to countries about unfair trade practices, including stealing intellectual property and providing state aid to their industries. Instead, his comments on trade during the speech were restricted to several sentences that omitted China in which he repeated that "fair and reciprocal" trade was necessary.

Trump had threatened to walk away from trade agreements like the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico, and the US-South Korean Free Trade Agreement, unless they bolster US manufacturing and American jobs.

Last week, he imposed tariffs on imported washing machines and solar panels in his first major trade actions since withdrawing the United States from the Trans Pacific Partnership trade agreement within weeks of taking office last year.

"We will work to fix bad trade deals and negotiate new ones," Trump said, adding: "We will protect American workers and American intellectual property, through strong enforcement of our trade rules."

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Earnings surge for Samsung on huge chip profit

SEOUL, South Korea, Jan 31, (AP): Quarterly earnings surged again for Samsung Electronics, thanks to its record-breaking chip business.

The South Korean company said Wednesday that its October-December earnings jumped 74 percent to 12 trillion won (\$11.2 billion), compared with 6.9 trillion won a year earlier. It was slightly higher than analysts' con-

sensus of 11 trillion won, according to financial data provider FactSet.

Sales and operating profit also rose in line with Samsung's earlier guidance. Sales rose 24 percent to 66 trillion won (\$61.6 billion) and operating profit was up 64 percent to 15 trillion won (\$14 billion).

Samsung's flagship semiconductor business continued making record-

high profits. The division, which supplies chips that help data centers, servers, mobile devices and computers save data and run multiple programs rapidly, generated 10.9 trillion won (\$10.1 billion) in operating income during the quarter on sales of 21.1 trillion won (\$19.7 billion), an unusually lucrative record for a manufacturing company.

Line to launch cryptocurrency exchange amid hacking fears

TOKYO, Jan 31, (RTRS): Japan's Line Corp plans to launch a cryptocurrency exchange, a move that comes as regulators investigate such exchanges in the country after hackers stole \$530 million in digital money from Coincheck in one of the world's biggest cyberheists.

Line said in a statement on Wednesday that it has applied to Japan's financial regulator to operate an exchange, with the application under review.

Japan's Financial Services Agency, which oversees registrations of new exchanges, said on Monday it would investigate all cryptocurrency exchanges in Japan for security gaps after the hack at the Coincheck exchange.

The theft on Friday of 58 billion yen (\$530.84 million) of NEM coins from Coincheck has highlighted the security vulnerabilities in trading an asset that global policymakers are struggling to regulate.

investment funds

Funds	Fund Manager	Valuation	Valued date	Currency	Net Asset Value (NAV)	Prev NAV	Prev NAV Dated	Funds	Fund Manager	Valuation	Valued date	Currency	Net Asset Value (NAV)	Prev NAV	Prev NAV Dated	
National Bank of Kuwait																
Money Market Funds	Watani KD Money Market Fund II Watani USD Money Market Fund Watani KD Money Market Fund (Acc to Islamic Shariah principles) II Watani USD Money Market Fund (Acc to Islamic Shariah principles) II	NBK Capital NBK Global Asset Management Co. Ltd.	Weekly Weekly	Jan 16, 2018 Jan 16, 2018	KD USD	1,036 10,286	1,035 10,128	Jan 7, 2018	Al Rou'yah Fund	KMEFIC	Monthly	Nov 30, 2017	KD	1,359	1,487	Sept 30, 2017
Gulf Bank	Al Bash'aer GCC Equity Fund Coast Fund Markaz Real Estate Fund	Kwt. Fin. & Inv. Co. & Gulf Fin. House Coast Investment & Dev. Co.	Monthly Monthly Bi-annual	Dec 31, 2017 Jan 11, 2018 Dec 31, 2017	USD	7,026 0,572 1,375	6,290 0,667 1,391	Nov 30, 2017 Jan 4, 2018 Nov 30, 2017								
Al Ahli Bank	Al Ahli Gulf Fund Al Ahli Kuwaiti Fund	Al Ahli Bank Al Ahli Bank	Monthly Monthly	Dec 31, 2017 Dec 31, 2017	KD	0,851 0,827	0,874 0,856	Nov 30, 2017 Nov 30, 2017								
Burgan Bank	Burgan Equity Fund	Burgan Bank	Monthly	Jan 2, 2018	KD	1,071	1,117	Nov 26, 2017								
Boubyan Bank	Boubyan KD Money Market Fund Boubyan KD Money Market Fund II	Boubyan Bank Boubyan Bank	Weekly Weekly	Jan 16, 2018 Jan 16, 2018	KD	1,071 1,018	1,070 1,017	Dec 13, 2017								
Boubyan Capital Investment Co.	Boubyan USD Liquidity Fund Boubyan Multi-Asset Holding Fund	Boubyan Capital Investment Co Boubyan Bank	Jan 16, 2018 Sept 30, 2017	USD	10,286 10,980	10,277 10,860	Dec 13, 2017 Aug 31, 2017									
Kuwait Investment Co.	Al Reed Fund Kuwait Investment Fund Al Hilal Fund Al Atheer Fund Global Bond Fund Diversified Fund European Fund Pacific Equity Fund Kuwait Investment Co North American Equity Fund	Kuwait Investment Co Kuwait Investment Co	Weekly Weekly Monthly Monthly Monthly Weekly Weekly Weekly Monthly	Jan 18, 2018 Dec 28, 2017 Jan 22, 2018 Jan 20, 2017 Jan 17, 2018 Dec 29, 2017 Jan 17, 2018 Jan 17, 2018 Dec 29, 2017 Jan 18, 2018	KD	1,069 0,739 0,704 1,009 0,620										

Egypt's Sisi inaugurates Zohr gas field

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi on Wednesday inaugurated the offshore Zohr gas field, aimed at making the Arab world's most populous country self-sufficient in natural gas by the end of 2018.

"We are now entering into the self-sufficiency stage ... and, God willing, by the end of the year we will have reached self-sufficiency," Petroleum Minister

Tarek al-Molla said at a ceremony in the northern city of Port Said, broadcast live on state television.

In December, the oil ministry said it was starting production from the field discovered in 2015 by Italian energy giant Eni with an initial 350 million cubic feet (10 million cubic metres) a day.

Molla, at the ceremony attended by Sisi, said Egypt

expects it "will be able to stop importing liquefied natural gas ... and therefore save what we import which is \$230 million per month, or \$2.8 billion annually".

The Egyptian government is trying to roll back the impact of the 2011 uprising that toppled longtime ruler Hosni Mubarak and led to years of political, security and economic turmoil.

(AP)

Kuwait bourse closes month on upbeat note

IPG soars 30 fils; NBK slips

By John Mathews

Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 31: Kuwait bourse headed north on Wednesday to wind up the month on a buoyant note. The price index clawed back from early session losses to close 23.74 pts higher at 6,687.81 points. Some of the mid and small caps shone whereas the blue chips closed mostly in red.

The KSX 15 gauge dipped 9.1 pts to 9,40.81 points while weighted index fell 2.82 points to 4,11.98 points. The volume turnover meanwhile shrank after two-day rise. 107.54 million shares changed hands – a 20.7 pct drop from the day before.

The sectors closed mixed. Real estate outshone the rest with 2.63 pct gain whereas technology slid 2.1 pct, the worst performer of the day. Volume wise, banks garnered the highest market share o 28.4 percent and financial services followed with 25.3 pct contribution.

In the individual shares, National Bank of Kuwait extended last session's losses with a 12 fils drop to 740 fils after trading 3.5 million shares and Kuwait Finance House slid 11 fils to 585 fils. Independent Petroleum Group soared 30 fils to 430 fils.

Zain fell 5 fils to 472 fils after trading over 1 million shares and Ooredoo was unchanged at KD 1.145. Kuwait Telecommunications Co (VIVA) climbed 8 fils to 790 fils and Agility was down 6 fils at 863 fils extending Tuesday's losses.

The market opened weak and drifted lower in early trade. The main index continued to meander south amid sluggish sentiment and plummeted the day's lowest level of 6,616 points past the mid-session. It bounced thereafter and closed with modest gains.

Top gainer of the day, Ream soared 17.2 pct to 837 fils and Marakez climbed 10.9 percent to stand next. Kuwait Cable Vision sank 19 pct, the steepest decliner of the day and Ithmaar Bank topped the volume with 18.8 million shares.

Despite the day's gains the market spread was heavily skewed towards the losers. 72 stocks advanced whereas 26 closed lower.

Of the 126 counter active on Wednesday, 28 closed flat. 4,274 deals worth KD 4.22 million were

Shed

Kuwait Cement Co was unchanged at 470 fils and Kuwait Portland Cement shed 9 fils Boubyan Petrochemical Co stood pat at 712 fils and Al Quran Petrochemical Co clipped 2 fils before settling at 339 fils.

Metal and Recycling Co fell 5 fils to 65 fils and NICBM held ground at 190 fils. ACICO Industries climbed 6 fils to 246 fils and Educational Holding Co climbed 10 fils to 319 fils. OSOS inched 1 fil into green.

Humansoft Holding dialed down 1 fil and NAPESCO paused at 800 fils. The company's fourth quarter earnings rose 2 pct to KD 2.02 million from same period a year earlier. During fiscal year 2017, earnings surged by 30.1 pct year-on-year to KD 10.02 million. The board has recommended a cash dividend of 60% of par value or 60 fils per share for 2017.

In the banking sector, Burgan Bank dialed up 2 fils whereas Gulf Bank and Commercial Bank were unchanged at 248 fils and 400 fils respectively. Al Ahli Bank paused at 335 fils.

Kuwait International Bank lipped 2 fils. The bank posted a drop of 10.6% in profits to KD 4.23 mln during the fourth quarter of 2017 compared to the same period in 2016. During full year, earnings fell 2.8 percent to KD 17.7 million. The board has recommended 10% cash dividends.

Top gainer of the day, Ream soared 17.2 pct to 837 fils and Marakez climbed 10.9 percent to stand next. Kuwait Cable Vision sank 19 pct, the steepest decliner of the day and Ithmaar Bank topped the volume with 18.8 million shares.

Despite the day's gains the market spread was heavily skewed towards the losers. 72 stocks advanced whereas 26 closed lower.

Of the 126 counter active on Wednesday, 28 closed flat. 4,274 deals worth KD 4.22 million were

transacted – a 15 pct drop in value from the day before.

National Industries Group fell 3 fils to 162 fils after trading over 2 million shares and Gulf Cable fell 2 fils to 430 fils.

Heavy Engineering Industries and Shipbuilding Co ticked 1 fil higher and Equipment Holding Co eased 1.1 fils to 38.9 fils.

Jazeera Airways and ALAFCO was flat at 649 fils and 376 fils respectively and KCPG gave up 4 fils to close at 150 fils.

Combined Group Contracting Co clipped 2 fils and EK Holding climbed 10 fils to 47.1 fils and Al Deera Holding gave up 1.9 fils.

Kuwait Financial Investment Co (Markaz) and Sokouk Holding were flat at 111 fils and 50.2 fils respectively while Arzan closed 0.3 fils in green. Unicap fell 1.8 fils to 47.1 fils and Al Deera Holding closed mostly in red.

Kuwait and Gulf Links gave up 3 fils before settling at 109 fils while KGL Logistics trimmed 0.2 fil. Inovest slipped 6 fils and Mezzan Holding stood pat at 778 fils.

Health Care

Kuwait Cement Co was unchanged at 470 fils and Kuwait Portland Cement shed 9 fils

Boubyan Petrochemical Co stood pat at 712 fils and Al Quran Petrochemical Co clipped 2 fils

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Boeing reports jump in earnings, upbeat on 2018

Boeing reported a jump in fourth-quarter earnings on Wednesday thanks to higher commercial plane deliveries and a boost from US tax reform as it projected more strong results in 2018.

Shares of the US aerospace giant powered higher after it reported net profit in the fourth quarter of \$3.1 billion, up a stunning 92 percent from the year-ago period.

Revenues came in at \$25.4

billion, up nine percent from the equivalent stretch in 2016, strengthened by higher commercial plane deliveries and increased defense revenues from deliveries of weapons systems.

Boeing has benefited from rising demand for commercial aircraft as airlines score higher profits and boost orders.

"Across Boeing our teams delivered a record year of fi-

nancial and operational performance as they focused on disciplined execution of production and development programs, growing services, and delivering value to customers," Boeing chief executive Dennis Muilenburg said.

Earnings were lifted by \$1.1 billion following passage of US tax reform, which permitted Boeing to reduce its deferred tax liabilities. (AFP)

Facebook bans ads for cryptocurrencies

Facebook says it is banning all ads related to cryptocurrencies in an effort to fight scams.

The social media giant said in a statement it is barring ads for "financial products and services that are frequently associated with misleading or deceptive promotional practices, such as binary options, initial coin offerings and cryptocurrencies."

Initial coin offerings or ICOs

are a way for companies to raise funds by selling investors cryptographic assets.

Fraud is common in the world of hot digital currencies such as bitcoin.

This week, for instance, the US Securities and Exchange Commission shut down an initial coin offering by a Texas company called AriseBank.

AriseBank was accused of relying on celebrity endorsers such

as boxer Evander Holyfield and social media to cheat investors out of \$600 million of its goal of \$1 billion for a currency it called "AriseCoin."

In a blog post announcing the news, Facebook product management director Rob Leathern hinted that Facebook may modify the new policy at some point to allow bona fide crypto-related businesses to advertise again. (AFP)

the bottomline

NEW YORK: US private equity giant Blackstone has agreed to pay \$17 billion for a majority stake in the financial services unit of Thomson Reuters, according to a joint statement issued Tuesday.

The deal would give Blackstone a controlling stake in the unit that delivers financial research and other tools to market professionals through dedicated terminals and subscription services. (AFP)

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STOCKHOLM: Shares in low-cost fashion brand Hennes & Mauritz AB plunged on Wednesday after the Swedish company said it was having trouble adapting to a rapid and global shift to online shopping among consumers.

The company said its profits fell 33 percent in the fourth quarter, to 3.99 billion kronor (\$506 million), with sales dropping 2 percent to 50.4 million kronor (\$6.4 million). It said "the industry changes are challenging everyone and this will continue in 2018."

CEO Karl-Johan Persson said that the digitalization of shopping "is driving the need to transform and re-think faster and faster." He said the group's performance was "clearly below our expectations." (AP)

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PARIS: Global steel giant Arcelor Mittal said Wednesday that its net profit more than doubled last year as the worldwide market for steel improved.

ArcelorMittal said in a statement that its bottom-line net profit amounted to \$4.6 billion, up from \$1.8 billion a year earlier.

Underlying or operating profit jumped by 30 percent to \$5.4 billion on a 21-percent increase in sales to \$68.7 billion, the statement said. (AFP)

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STOCKHOLM: Swedish telecoms giant Ericsson said Wednesday that it rang up huge losses last year as network competition, restructuring costs and investment in lightning-fast 5G technology pushed it deeply into the red.

Ericsson said in a statement it booked net loss of 35.1 billion kronor (3.6 billion euros, \$4.4 billion) in 2017, compared with profit of 1.9 billion kronor the year before.

The group also booked an underlying or operating loss of 38.1 billion kronor last year after profit of 6.3 billion kronor in 2016, while revenues dropped by 10 percent to 201.3 billion kronor, the statement said. (AFP)

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MADRID: A strong performance in Brazil helped Santander offset weakness in Britain and boost its profits by 7.0 percent last year, the Spanish banking giant said Wednesday.

The eurozone's biggest bank in terms of market value said its net profit climbed to 6.6 billion euros (\$8.2 billion) last year, from 6.2 billion in 2016.

"Throughout the year we have seen strong growth in Latin America, with our businesses in Brazil and Mexico performing exceptionally well," Santander's chief executive Ana Botin said in a statement.

Greater customer activity in Brazil and a recovery in the exchange rate of the Brazilian real helped the bank as the Latin American country bounces back from a sharp economic downturn. (AFP)

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FRANKFURT, Germany: Industrial equipment maker Siemens said Wednesday that its net income rose 12 percent to 2.2 billion euros (\$2.7 billion) in the last three months of 2017, helped by one-time gains from the sale of shares in its Osram lighting business and from the US corporate tax cut.

The company said results for the quarter, its fiscal first, benefited from the upswing in the global economy. Revenue rose 3 percent to 19.8 billion euros (\$24.6 billion) while orders increased 14 percent to 22.5 billion euros.

Orders are key to future earnings for the company since projects can take months or years to deliver. Shares in Siemens AG rose after the earnings announcement and traded 0.2 percent higher at 122.02 euros by mid-morning in Europe. (AP)

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STOCKHOLM: Swedish truck maker Volvo said Wednesday that its net profit sped ahead by 60 percent in 2017, as strong global demand for heavy goods vehicles drove up sales to a new record.

Investors cheered the latest earnings numbers, with Volvo's share price showing a gain of 1.2 percent on the Stockholm stock exchange in early afternoon, while the rest of the market was flat.

Volvo said in a statement that its net profit soared to 21 billion kronor (2.0 billion euros, \$2.67 billion) for the full year, as sales jumped by 11 percent to 334 billion kronor. (AP)

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THE HAGUE: Dutch telecoms firm KPN hailed a rise in fortunes Wednesday, with profits up by nearly a third in 2017, despite the end of European roaming charges.

Net profits reached 485 million euros (\$603 million), up 31 percent on 2016 when one-off expenses had hit the group's bottom line.

Chief executive Eelco Blok attributed the "substantial results" to KPN's new strategy.

"We have optimised our customer service and deployed a targeted household approach, which resulted in record-high customer satisfaction levels," he said in a statement. (AP)

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FRANKFURT: Automaker Daimler says it has fired an executive who represented it at an industry-backed organization that commissioned diesel exhaust tests involving monkeys.

A statement from Daimler AG on Wednesday did not identify by name the executive, citing privacy concerns. It said the executive sat on the top management board of the now-disolved EUGT entity.

Volkswagen on Tuesday suspended its head of external relations, who said he knew about the experiments but did not inform the company's then-CEO, Martin Winterkorn. (AP)

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TOKYO: Japanese video-game maker Nintendo's net profit jumped 31 percent to 135.2 billion yen (\$1.2 billion) in April-December, helped by the popularity of its Switch hybrid game machine, the company said Wednesday.

Kyoto-based Nintendo, which makes Super Mario and Pokemon games, said its sales in the first nine months of 2017 more than doubled from a year earlier to 857 billion yen (\$7.9 billion). (AP)

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Equities gain as Boeing boosts earnings hopes; dollar retreats

Oil set for strongest January since 2013

two days of steep losses, boosted by a surge in Boeing.

The planemaker forecast full-year profit well above market estimates, sparking a 6.2 percent surge in its shares, the biggest weight in the price-weighted Dow Jones Industrial Average and the benchmark S&P 500.

Boeing helped the industrials sector increase 1 percent, the most among the 11 major S&P sectors. But the biggest boost came from the tech sector, which gained 0.90 percent. Microsoft and Facebook were both up more than 1 percent ahead of their results after the bell.

The blue-chip Dow suffered its biggest two-day drop since September 2016 over Monday and Tuesday as US Treasury yields surged to near four-year highs on expectations of global central banks lowering stimulus.

At 10:50 am ET, the Dow was up 157.45 points, or 0.6 percent, at 26,234.34, the S&P was up 7.52 points, or 0.26 percent, at 2,829.95 and the Nasdaq Composite was up 31.36 points, or 0.42 percent, at 7,433.84.

President Donald Trump's State of the Union address also held few surprises. He said he wanted legislation to generate at least \$1.5 trillion for infrastructure spending and revisited a campaign promise to lower drug prices.

An ADP report showing the US private sector added much more jobs in January than expected, 234,000 vs 185,000, also boost sentiment ahead of the more comprehensive non-farm payrolls on Friday.

Among stocks, chipmaker AMD rose 4.7 percent, while Electronic Arts jumped 9.1 percent after their upbeat quarterly reports.

Amherst's strong results and forecast sent its shares up 2.5 percent and also boosted other health insurers, a day after the group and other health stocks were hit by news of Amazon.com's healthcare plans.

Advancing issues outnumbered decliners on the NYSE by 1,741 to 1,060. On the Nasdaq, 1,452 issues rose and 1,308 fell.

The S&P 500 index showed 28 new 52-week highs and three new lows, while the Nasdaq recorded 66 new highs and 25 new lows.

UK

The FTSE 100 fell on Wednesday as shares in outsourcer Capita tanked after a profit warning, further weighing on the monthly performance of the UK's blue-chip index.

The index ended January down 2.1 percent after falling 0.7 percent on the day to 7,533.55 points, its lowest level since Dec. 21.

Earnings updates were the main focus on Wednesday, none more so than Capita's. The mid-cap company's shares tumbled by 47 percent, its biggest one-day loss, after it issued a profit warning, suspended its dividend and announced a rights issue.

Peers Babcock and Serco fell 2.5 percent and 6.3 percent respectively.

US stocks rose in late morning trading on Wednesday, with the Dow climbing more than 200 points after

It has been a difficult month for the sector after the collapse of Carillion when banks pulled the plug on a business swamped by debt and pension liabilities.

Elsewhere, shares in utility SSE were among the top gainers on the FTSE 100, climbing by 1.1 percent after the electricity and gas supplier raised its full-year profit outlook thanks to a rise in production from its renewable energy plants.

Paddy Power Betfair rose 0.6 percent on the back of an upgrade from broker Investec to "buy" from "hold" and a price target increase from HSBC.

British housebuilders brought up the rear, with shares in Persimmon, Berkeley Group and Taylor Wimpey all down more than 2 percent. The falls followed a media report saying that the government could rescind planning permission on unused land.

Declines among cyclical sectors such as energy, materials and financials also weighed. These sectors, which are more sensitive to the economic cycle, made a strong start to the year as investors bet on a global boom lifting equities but have since succumbed to profit-taking.

Asia

Asian stocks struggled Wednesday as traders tracked sharp Wall Street losses despite a major speech by US President Donald Trump extolling his administration's economic achievements.

But despite an initial positive ripple from the address, Asian bourses largely failed to shrug off a strongly negative Wall Street lead, where the Dow on Tuesday posted its largest decline since May.

In his speech Trump also called for "fair" trade and declared that "the era of economic surrender is over".

The Asian declines meant that, despite an overall upbeat January for equities, this week's share sell-off continued into a third day.

Asian investors have locked in profits at the month-end and ahead of a series of key earnings reports and policy announcements.

Bearish sentiment was compounded by weak Chinese manufacturing data. Factory figures for January came in below expectations, hampered by crackdowns on debt and pollution levels.

Shanghai finished down 0.2 percent, while Seoul lost 0.1 percent and Singapore 0.4 percent.

Tokyo shed 0.8 percent to extend its losing streak for a sixth straight day.

Japanese tech firm Fujifilm announced 10,000 job cuts by March 2020 in its Fuji Xerox subsidiary, which it said was facing an "increasingly severe" market environment.

But there was positive news as Samsung Electronics reported a 73 percent jump in its fourth-quarter net profit, driven by demand for its memory chips and display panels, and Nintendo raised forecasts for net profit on strong

Switch console sales.

Japan's factory output also rose more than expected in December as production of automobile-related parts and other machines expanded.

Elsewhere, Hong Kong rose 0.9 percent, Taipei added 0.2 percent and Sydney gained 0.3 percent.

■ Key figures around 0810 GMT

Tokyo — Nikkei 225: Down 0.8 percent at 23,098.29 (close)

Hong Kong — Hang Seng: Up 0.9 percent at 32,887.27 (close)

Shanghai — Composite: Down 0.2 percent at 3,480.83 (close)

Dollar/yen: DOWN at 108.67 from 108.81 yen

Oil

Oil prices fell for a third day on Wednesday ahead of the possible first rise in US inventories in 11 weeks, but crude remained on track for its biggest gain in January in five years.

Brent crude, the global benchmark, was down 20 cents at \$68.82 a barrel by 1432 GMT, above a two-week low hit earlier in the day. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) was down 14 cents at \$46.36, adding to Tuesday's losses.

Despite Wednesday's weakness, prices are still on track for a fifth month of gains and Brent is set for its largest percentage January rise since 2013, with a 2.7 percent increase.

Higher prices, however, have encouraged US producers to increase their rig count. Energy companies added 12 oil rigs last week, the biggest weekly increase since March.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, along with other producers including Russia, has been waging a battle against US shale producers, agreeing to take 1.8 million barrels a day off the market until the end of 2018.

US Energy Department data on Wednesday is expected to show an increase in inventories for the first time in 11 weeks.

Analysts polled by Reuters forecast an average 100,000-barrel build in crude stocks.

Gold

Gold prices rebounded on Wednesday as the dollar resumed its down-trend, but analysts said bullion was vulnerable to weakness ahead of the Lunar New Year and if bulls start shedding their long positions.

Spot gold was up 0.5 percent at \$1,344.75 an ounce by 1500 GMT. In the previous session it touched its lowest since Jan 23 at \$1,334.10.

US gold futures for February delivery rose 0.6 percent to \$1,342.80.

Gold received a boost as the dollar fell, putting the currency on track for its biggest monthly drop in nearly two years. The euro climbed against the dollar as firm eurozone inflation data for January kept expectations alive for a swift withdrawal of the central bank's stimulus policies.

A weaker dollar makes commodities priced in the greenback cheaper for buyers using other currencies.

Rejuvenated Swansea stun Arsenal

Liverpool cruise

LONDON, Jan 31, (AFP): Petr Cech's howler rocked Arsenal as they crashed to a shock 3-1 defeat at Swansea, while Liverpool cruised to victory over Huddersfield on Tuesday.

Arsenal goalkeeper Cech's misjudged attempt to clear allowed Jordan Ayew to slot home Swansea's second goal at the Liberty Stadium.

It was the killer blow for Arsenal, who had already seen Sam Clucas equalise just one minute after Nacho Monreal put the visitors ahead from Mesut Ozil's pass in the 33rd minute. Clucas claimed his second four min-

SOCER

utes from time to finish off Arsenal, who have now won just once in their last five league games.

The result leaves Gunners manager Arsene Wenger still searching for his first away win of 2018, despite a second-half debut for substitute Henrikh Mkhitaryan following his move from Manchester United.

The Gunners are in sixth place, trailing eight points behind fourth-placed Liverpool in the race to qualify for the Champions League via a top-four finish.

The arrival of Borussia Dortmund striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, set to sign on Wednesday's transfer deadline day, can't come soon enough for Wenger.

"We will know more about that tomorrow morning," Wenger said of the Aubameyang move.

"I felt defensively we were very poor and made big mistakes. It's better not to talk about the second or third goals."

"Swansea were sharp, disciplined



(Left): Arsenal's German defender Shkodran Mustafi (left), vies with Swansea City's Ivorian striker Wilfried Bony during the English Premier League football match between Swansea City and Arsenal at The Liberty Stadium in Swansea, south Wales on Jan 30, 2018. Swansea won the game 3-1. (Right): Liverpool's German midfielder Emre Can (center), celebrates scoring the opening goal during the English Premier League football match between Huddersfield Town and Liverpool at the John Smith's Stadium in Huddersfield, northern England on Jan 30, 2018. (AFP)



Crystal Palace's Dutch defender Timothy Fosu-Mensah (left), tangles with West Ham United's Portuguese midfielder Joao Mario (right), during the English Premier League football match between West Ham United and Crystal Palace at The London Stadium, in east London on Jan 30, 2018. (AFP)



(Right): Liverpool's German midfielder Emre Can (center), celebrates scoring the opening goal during the English Premier League football match between Huddersfield Town and Liverpool at the John Smith's Stadium in Huddersfield, northern England on Jan 30, 2018. (AFP)

fashion thanks to goals from Emre Can, Roberto Firmino and Mohamed Salah in a 3-0 win.

The Reds had endured frustrating defeats against Swansea in the league and West Brom in the FA Cup.

But Jurgen Klopp's men dominated possession and from the moment Emre Can rocketed home a long-range opener in the 26th minute the result was never in doubt.

At the John Smith's Stadium, Liverpool got back on track in emphatic

on the stroke of half-time when he somehow squeezed the ball home from the byline after being played in by a clever Sadio Mane back-heel.

Klopp had left Dutch defender Virgil van Dijk on the bench, but the absence of the club-record signing was hardly noticed as the Reds continued in cruise control.

Salah completed the scoring from the penalty spot in the 78th minute after Can was tripped up in the box.

"We had to keep the ball and score at the right moments. Overall it was absolutely deserved," Klopp said.

"It was exactly what we needed. It was not a brilliant performance, but it was very mature and exactly what we needed at the right moment."

A Mark Noble penalty helped West Ham shrug off the disappointment of their embarrassing FA Cup fourth round defeat at Wigan with a hard-fought 1-1 draw against Crystal Palace.

Holders tame Rennes

Mbappe off as PSG reach League Cup final

PARIS, Jan 31, (AFP): Holders Paris Saint-Germain edged into the French League Cup final by beating Rennes 3-2 at Roazhon Park despite seeing Kylian Mbappe sent off on his return from injury.

Thomas Meunier put the visitors ahead with a magnificent volley, before Rennes winger Wahbi Khazri had a goal ruled out for handball after a video assistant referee review.

Brazilian defender Marquinhos tapped in after half-time, before Giovani Lo Celso was gifted PSG's third goal by a dreadful mistake from home goalkeeper Abdoulaye Diallo.

Mbappe saw red after another VAR decision for a terrible foul on Ismaila Sarr, but consolations from Diafra Sakho on his Rennes debut and Sanjin Prsic couldn't prevent PSG from continuing their bid for a fifth consecutive League Cup.

"I think the team kept calm and patient in the first half, and then we made the difference," said PSG coach Unai Emery.

"But Kylian's red card gave them some opportunities to score and get closer to us... But I'm happy with the way the players responded."

PSG are still on track to complete an unprecedented quadruple of the Ligue 1, Champions League, French Cup and French League Cup titles, after extending their winning streak in domestic cup competitions to 37 matches.

Emery made six changes to the team which thrashed Montpellier 4-0 in the league on Saturday, with Mbappe returning from a two-game injury absence and Edinson Cavani rested after breaking the club's all-time goalscoring record at the weekend.

Belgian right-back Meunier, no stranger to spectacular strikes, broke the deadlock in the 24th minute with a

wonderful finish from the edge of the area.

The 26-year-old barged his way through a couple of tackles before flicking the bouncing ball with the outside of his right foot, sending it looping over Diallo and in the far post for his fourth goal of the season.

The hosts thought they had equalised when Khazri took advantage of some woeful defending to stab into the corner, but the referee checked the VAR which showed that the former Sunderland player's first touch had bounced off his arm. Mbappe had the ball in the back of the net early in the second half but saw the goal ruled out for offside, with the decision upheld after another video review.

The runaway Ligue 1 leaders did

SOCER

double their tally in the 54th minute as centre-back Marquinhos was on hand to tap in after Diallo parried Angel Di Maria's shot.

Diallo was totally at fault for the third, as the Senegalese stopper allowed Lo Celso's tame effort to slip through his legs and bobble into the net.

Mbappe was given a straight red card in the 63rd minute to give Rennes a glimmer of hope.

The 19-year-old twice tried to foul Sarr, and succeeded by raking his studs down the back of the Rennes midfielder's leg while making zero attempt to play the ball.

Referee Mikael Lesage again turned to the video technology before giving Mbappe his marching orders.

Sakho, who had come on at half-time for his debut after joining Rennes from Premier League outfit West Ham, headed home his first goal for the club in the

Juve on track for fourth straight Italian Cup

BERGAMO, Italy, Jan 31, (AFP): Gonzalo Higuain scored after three minutes and Gianluigi Buffon saved a penalty as Juventus stayed on track for a fourth straight Italian Cup with a 1-0 semifinal, first leg win at Atalanta.

Buffon -- making his first appearance in goal since turning 40 and after a two-month layoff with a calf injury -- showed he was back at his best as he made his first Cup appearance since 2012.

The holders got on the scoresheet in Bergamo after just two-and-a-half minutes when Argentine Higuain found a way through the Atalanta defence and curled into the corner.

It was the quickest goal this season for Massimiliano Allegri's side who are sitting second in Serie A behind Napoli.

Atalanta thought they would level when the video assistant referee (VAR) awarded a penalty after Medhi Benatia handled in the box, but Alejandro Gomez's spot-kick was saved by the evergreen Buffon.

Buffon got down low to hold the Argentine's driven effort to the left.

"I am glad we honoured the

Italian Old Ladies edge Atalanta in 1st leg

second after half an hour with two Blaise Matuidi efforts deflected over the bar.

Buffon again saved two quick-fire attempts from top Atalanta scorer Gomez after the break, tipping over the second.

"I'm happy for Gigi (Buffon), who hadn't played in the Italian Cup for five years," Allegri added. "He hasn't forgotten everything he knew just for being out of action for 45 days."

"He had a rest for a few weeks, perhaps he needed to put his feet up, but he's back now and he's our first-choice goalkeeper."

"Wojciech Szczesny did well in his absence and is a champion, but Buffon is Buffon."

Despite beating league leaders Napoli at the San Paolo Stadium to advance to the semifinals, Atalanta could not find a way past Juventus who controlled the game.

Higuain came close late on and Buffon again saved his team three minutes from time when he blocked Andrea Petagna's point-blank shot.

Allegri's men now just have to maintain their advantage when they host Atalanta in the return leg on Feb 28 in Turin.

Hoops beat Hearts

Rodgers salutes Dembele revival

GLASGOW, Jan 31, (AFP): Celtic manager Brendan Rodgers hailed the return to form of striker Moussa Dembele as he helped inspire the Hoops to a 3-1 Scottish Premiership win over Hearts.

French forward Dembele had come in for criticism from Rodgers earlier in the month for having a lack of focus after being linked with a big-money move away from the Scottish champions.

However, the 21-year-old shone on his first start of 2018 as he provided assists for Odsonne Edouard and Dele Alli before grabbing his first goal since Nov 26.

And Rodgers revealed it was a heart-to-heart with the former Fulham forward that helped him rediscover the kind of form that saw him bag 32 goals last season.

SOCER

"That was much more like that tonight," Rodgers said.

"We sat down earlier in the week with Moussa and had a chat over a couple of days. On the second day we pulled together some videos of his work highlighting what his strengths are."

"Through everything that has gone on, he maybe has come away a wee bit from what his strengths are, so it was really just a case of looking at his game, breaking his game down and highlighting what type of player he is."

"When he is like that — when he is pressing and playing in the last line and holding the ball up — he is very hard to cope with."

The win over Hearts extends Celtic's lead at the top of the Scottish Premiership to 14 points and gains some revenge for the 4-0 loss at Tynecastle six weeks ago which ended their record-breaking 69-match unbeaten run.

It remains the only blemish on Rodgers' domestic record and he was pleased to see his players avenge the loss.

"We took our chances in the first half and didn't in the second half but overall it was a tremendous team performance," he said.

"The intensity in the game was there. I said after the game at Tynecastle that you have to match the aggression of Hearts. Craig has them well organised and they have good pace in the counter attack."

"I thought we dealt with the physical side very well, pressed it well and played forward and created chances."



Paris Saint-Germain's Italian midfielder Marco Verratti (left), vies with Rennes' French midfielder Benjamin Andre (right), during the French League Cup semifinal match between Rennes and Paris Saint-Germain at the Roazhon Park Stadium in Rennes on Jan 30, 2018. (AFP)

Sunderland slump

Birmingham out of drop zone

LONDON, Jan 31, (AFP): Birmingham climbed out of the Championship relegation zone and pushed Sunderland further into trouble with a crucial 3-1 win over their fellow strugglers.

David Davis put Birmingham in front after 28 minutes at St Andrew's and Jeremie Boga headed in from close range to double their lead just before half-time.

Sam Gallagher added Birmingham's third before Bryan Oviedo scored a consolation for Sunderland with seven minutes left.

Birmingham move up to 20th, while Sunderland slipped to second-bottom of the second-tier table.

At the other end, Derby missed the chance to close the gap on leaders Wolves as they were held to a goalless draw at Millwall.

Australia's Tim Cahill, who left Millwall almost 14 years ago to join Everton, was paraded to home fans after sealing a return to the club until the end of the season.

But in a game of few clear-cut chanc-

es Millwall could have done with Cahill on the pitch as Derby saw Ikechi Anya's late effort ruled out for offside.

Robert Snodgrass scored a 90th-minute winner to give promotion-chasing Aston Villa a 1-0 win at Sheffield United.

Scotland midfielder Snodgrass curled in a left-footed effort from the edge of the penalty area to snatch all three points.

Villa moved up to third following a fifth straight victory, now only a point behind Derby.

SOCER

The Blades, meanwhile, are seventh and two points off the top six.

Middlesbrough and Sheffield Wednesday also battled through a goalless draw at the Riverside, which did little for the home side's hopes of making up ground on the top six.

Preston, though, moved to just three points adrift of sixth-placed Fulham after a 3-0 win at Nottingham Forest.

Japan's revised smoking measures threaten smoky '20 Games: critics

2020 Tokyo Olympics costs keep rising despite efforts to cut

TOKYO, Jan 31, (Agencies): The price tag for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics keeps going up despite attempts to rein in the spending.

Over the last year, organizers have shifted several venues away from central Tokyo and have looked for existing facilities instead of building new ones.

However, in the last week Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike has explained that the city will need to more than double the billions it is already budgeting to stage the games. The International Olympic Committee and Tokyo organizers contest this, saying the city's added costs are for many projects that would have been done — with or without the Olympics.

In late December, Tokyo Olympic organizers said the games would cost 1.35 trillion yen, which is about \$12.4 billion at the present exchange rate of 109 yen to the dollar. But at a news conference last Friday, Koike said the city would spend an added 810 billion yen (\$7.5 billion), bringing total games-related spending to 2.16 trillion yen (roughly \$20 billion).

Tokyo organizers and the International Olympic Committee have talked openly about the need to cut rising costs, which have plagued recent Olympics and driven away possible bidding cities.

In emails to The Associated Press, the IOC and organizers said the new spending should not be viewed as part of the Olympic costs.

The IOC called the expenses "regular administrative costs" for the city that fall "outside the overall games budget." Local organizers said the same thing.

Koike contradicted their position.

She said the new costs were for "projects directly and indirectly related to the games." She included building barrier-free facilities for Paralympic athletes, training programs for volunteers, and advertising and tourism plans.

She said the budget numbers still needed to be studied, and city's legislature still needed to approve the spending.

"We just presented the rough scale of the costs," she said. "Tokyo will be the one to

OLYMPICS

cover it, so I presented it because I wanted the Tokyo residents to be aware of it."

Asked about further cost-cutting sought by the IOC, Koike said "it's not a task only for Tokyo, but the effort should be made as a whole."

She also played up the decades-long impact of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, which showed the world a modern, fast-moving and rebuilt country following World War II.

"Think about all that still remains as legacies from the 1964 Tokyo Olympics — the metropolitan expressway and the bullet-train system,



In this Jan 26, 2018 photo, Tokyo Gov Yuriko Koike holds brochures of a 2018 draft budget while speaking during a press conference in Tokyo. (AP)

for instance," she said.

Tokyo's 2020 Olympics are being funded largely by public money. The 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics were billed as a split between public and private money. The eventual price tag was about \$13 billion — and some estimates put it at \$20 billion.

Under Koike's plan, the Tokyo city government will now chip in 1.41 trillion yen (\$13 billion), and the national government will

spend 150 billion yen (\$1.4 billion). This represents 72 percent of spending to prepare the Olympics. The remaining part comes from the local organizing committee, which will add 600 billion yen (\$5.5 billion) in private money.

Tokyo's winning bid in 2013 was listed at 730 billion yen, about one-third of the list price (323 sq ft) or less.

That would be far more accommodating to smokers than the ministry's plan of last March that limited smoking to bars and other liquor-serving spots with a floor space of 30 square m. (323 sq ft) or less.

"If establishments with a floor space of 150 square metres or less are exempt from the smoking ban, about 90 percent of bars will escape the restrictions," said Yumiko Mochizuki, a doctor and member of the Japan Cancer Society.

"If things stay this way, the Olympic Games in 2020 will be held in an extremely smoky environment."

Meanwhile, two Japanese doctors on Wednesday raised concerns about the government's latest effort to prevent second-hand smoking, saying it could lead to the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo being held in an "extremely smoky environment".

The criticism comes a day after the government announced the thrust of planned revisions to a law on second-hand smoking, saying smoking would continue to be permitted in small bars and restaurants that put up warning signs for potential customers.

The health ministry gave no specifics, but

Japan's major newspapers said it contemplated allowing smoking in establishments with floor space of 150 square metres (1,615 square feet) or less.

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"If things stay this way, the Olympic Games in 2020 will be held in an extremely smoky environment."

Health ministry officials were not immediately available for comment.

Japan ranks at the bottom globally in anti-smoking measures, going by the types of public spaces that are entirely smoke-free, says the World Health Organization, which has teamed with global Olympics officials to ensure smoke-free Games venues.

Ahead of the 2020 Olympics, the International Olympics Committee (IOC) is among those pressuring the Japanese capital to follow Rio de Janeiro and other recent games hosts in banning smoking in all public areas.

Mominul 'century' powers B'desh charge on day one

Bangladesh reach 374-4 at stumps

CHITTAGONG, Bangladesh, Jan 31, (AFP): Mominul Haque hit a towering century to help Bangladesh take opening day honours in the first Test against Sri Lanka in Chittagong on Wednesday.

Mominul hit an unbeaten 175 as the hosts reached 374-4 at

stumps after electing to bat first at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium.

The left-hander shared a 236-run third-wicket stand with former captain Mashfiqur Rahim, who fell just short of his fifth Test hundred after scoring 92 off 192 balls.

Skipper Mahmudullah Riyad, on nine, was batting alongside

Mominul when stumps were drawn at the start of the two-match series.

Opener Tamim Iqbal gave the hosts a strong start with his brisk 52 and said it was "a fantastic day" for Bangladesh.

"We were very positive and attacking from ball one. It was nice to see."

Suranga Lakmal struck with the second new ball to claim two wickets off successive deliveries and give Sri Lanka some respite late into the final session.

Lakmal, who returned figures of 2-43, forced Mashfiqur to edge behind the stumps after he had struck 10 fours in his relatively sedate innings.

The medium-pacer bowled Liton Das for a duck with the next ball, which swung late to uproot the off-stump after the batsman had attempted to leave the delivery.

But Mominul was dominant at the other end, hitting 16 fours and a six off veteran spinner Rangana Herath during his stay,

CRICKET

which has lasted 203 balls so far.

The 26-year-old posted his fifth Test century and his first in more than three years off just 96 balls, with back-to-back fours off left-arm wrist spinner Lakshan Sandakan.

He then hit Herath for his only six to reach 160 and bring up his 2,000 Test runs in his 47th innings.

Mominul was the fastest Bangladeshi to achieve the feat, overtaking Tamim's record of 53 innings.

Sri Lankan batting coach Thilan Samaraweera was full of praise for Mominul, who is nicknamed Mini.

"We should have bowled better than that. It is 40 runs too many for our part..." he said.

Mominul's masterful display at his favourite ground came after Bangladesh had lost both openers, Tamim and Imrul Kayes, in the morning session.

Tamim made 52 off 53 balls, sharing a 72-run opening stand with Kayes (40), until off-spinner Dilruwan Perera bowled him with a beautiful delivery that pitched outside off-stump and spun sharply.

Tamim struck six fours, and a sweetly timed six off Perera over long-on, in his 25th Test fifty.

Sandakan trapped Kayes leg-before on the stroke of lunch, ending the left-hander's 75-ball stay.

Latif's appeal against spot-fixing ban rejected

Bangladesh cricketer Mominul Haque plays a shot during the first day of the first cricket Test between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka at Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong on Jan 31. (AFP)

Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka Scoreboard

CHITTAGONG, Bangladesh, Jan 31, (AFP): Scoreboard at stumps on the opening day of the first Test between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in Chittagong on Wednesday:

BANGLADESH first innings

Tamim Iqbal b D. Perera 52

Imrul Kayes lbw b Sandakan 40

Mominul Haque not out 175

Mashfiqur Rahim c Dickwella b Lakmal .. 92

Liton Das b Lakmal 0

Mahmudullah not out 9

Extras (nb 4, w2) 6

Total (four wickets; 90 overs) 374

To bat: Mosaddek Hossain, Mehedi Hasan, Taijul Islam, Sunzamul Islam,

Mustafizur Rahman
Fall of wickets: 1-72 (Tamim), 2-120 (Kayes), 3-356 (Mashfiqur), 4-356 (Liton)
Bowling: Lakmal 17-3-43-2 (nb2), Kumara 12-1-64-0 (w1), D. Perera 24-4-98-1 (nb2), Herath 20-1-100-0, Sandakan 13-1-58-1 (w1), Dhananjaya 4-0-11-0

Sri Lanka: D. Karunaratne, D. de Silva, K. Mendis, D. Chandimal, N. Dickwella, R. Silva, D. Perera, R. Herath, S. Lakmal, L. Sandakan, L. Kumaras

Toss: Bangladesh

Umpires: Rod Tucker (AUS), Marais Erasmus (SA)

TV Umpire: Joel Wilson (WI)

Match Referee: David Boon (AUS)

Mustafizur Rahman

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Russia to create competition for banned athletes

President Vladimir Putin has ordered the government to organise a sports competition for Russian athletes banned from the upcoming Winter Games in Pyeongchang over a doping scandal, his spokesman said Wednesday.

Putin "reminded the cabinet of the decision to organise a competition for those of our athletes who had not been allowed to take part in the Olympic Games," Russian news agencies quoted Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov as saying.

He added that winning athletes

would receive compensation equal to what Moscow normally awards Olympic medallists.

The International Olympic Committee banned Russia from next month's event in South Korea after a report on a vast Moscow-backed doping scheme in previous Games.

Olympic officials have cleared 169 Russian athletes for competition in Pyeongchang.

They will compete under a neutral flag as "Olympic Athletes from Russia." (AFP)



This photo taken on Jan 30, 2018 shows snow falling as the Olympic Rings are illuminated at night in Pyeongchang ahead of the Winter Olympic Games. The 2018 Winter Olympic Games in South Korea will take place from Feb 9 to 25. (AFP)



Virtue and Moir one of the favorites to win gold

All eyes on Team Canada in figure skating at Olympics

TORONTO, Jan 31, (AP): The figure skating contingent from Canada, at 17 strong the largest of any nation, intends to lead its country into the Winter Olympics next week in ways both literal and figurative.

The literal: Two-time ice dance medalists Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir, one of the favorites to win gold, will carry the maple leaf flag into Pyeongchang Olympic Stadium for the opening ceremony.

The figurative: With three ice dance couples, three pairs, three women and two men, the Canadians are podium threats in all four disciplines, not to mention heavy favorites in the team event.

"I'm so impressed by the depth of this team," said Isabelle Charest, the Canadian chef de mission and a three-time Olympic medalist in speed skating. "There are so many strong contenders and we have tremendous hope for them heading into the games."

The hope is grounded in some accomplished resumes.

Virtue and Moir, the reigning world champions, are a good place to start.

Medals are rarer than snowflakes

Malaysia, Singapore take up Winter Olympics 'challenge'

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 31, (AFP): In tropical Malaysia and Singapore, Winter Olympics medals are rarer than snowflakes — but a dedicated group of athletes are hoping to change that as they make their countries' debut Games appearances.

A Singaporean speed skater, as well as a figure skater and skier from Malaysia will compete in the Games, a huge achievement for countries better known for palm-fringed beaches and year-round heat than winter sports.

It is the latest sign of an unlikely, yet growing, interest in ice and snow sports in a winterless, steamy region, where temperatures rarely drop below 20 degrees Celsius (68 Fahrenheit) in most places.

A major milestone for winter sports in the region came last year when they featured for the first time at the Southeast Asian Games in Malaysia, with ice hockey, figure skating and speed skating making their debuts.

But it was not without problems — puddles formed on the hockey rink during matches, slowing down the puck and forcing marshalls with sponges to dash onto the ice to mop up the water.

Figure skater Julian Yee, who will represent Malaysia at next month's Games, is typical of athletes from the region who have had to overcome a lack of facilities, limited official support and public scepticism to pursue their dreams.

When growing up, the only places he could find to practise were a handful of small, crowded rinks in the shopping malls scattered around the capital Kuala Lumpur.

Figure skating on the tiny rinks was "like trying to get an A380 (world's biggest airliner) to land on a very small runway", the 20-year-old told AFP.

But he persevered and began training in the morning and evening when the rinks were less crowded.

"I skated two times a day, six days — sometimes six-and-a-half days — a week," he said.

There were no official programmes or funding for figure skating so Yee's parents had to spend huge amounts of their own money on his training.

They also sent him to train abroad during school holidays, in China and South Korea.

"People said: 'Are you mad? You're sacrificing all this money,'" his mother Irene Cheow told AFP. "We're looking at differently now."

Yee's efforts paid off and he won gold at last year's Southeast Asian Games, and came eighth in the 2017



This photo taken on Dec 6, 2017 shows Singapore speed skater Cheyenne Goh skating during a training session at an ice rink in Singapore. (AFP)

Asian Winter Games. His crowning glory was qualification for Pyeongchang, alongside Malaysian skier Jeffrey Webb.

Speed skater Cheyenne Goh has faced similar challenges in neighbouring Singapore, where even a modest cold snap can set the population shivering.

This month a freak monsoon surge sent the mercury plummeting to almost 21 degrees Celsius (70 fahrenheit) — chilly by Singapore standards — sending people rushing to the shops to buy scarves and winter jackets.

But unlike her compatriots, Goh got a taste for a cold climate after moving to Canada aged four, where she developed a love of winter sports.

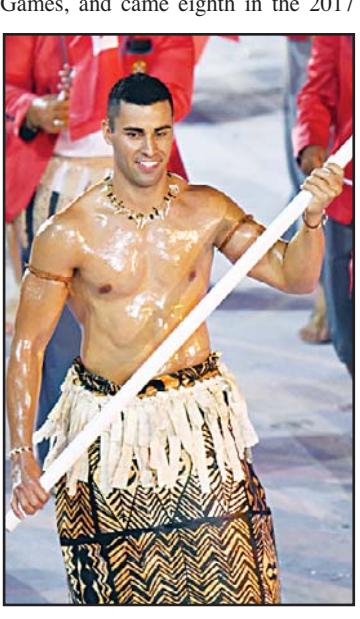
The 18-year-old initially took up ice hockey, a staple of Canadian life, before discovering short-track speed skating while watching the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics.

As well as qualifying for the Olympics, she has represented Singapore at the Asian Winter Games and won two silver medals and a bronze at last year's SEA Games.

Goh, who is taking a year off after high school and splits her time between Singapore and Canada, insisted her success was not unusual.

"It's not all that strange that I'm representing a country with no winter to speak of at winter sport," she told AFP after a recent training session in the city-state.

She is modest about her chances of matching the success of swimmer Joseph Schooling, who won Singapore's first Olympic gold medal in Rio in 2016.



This file photo taken on Aug 5, 2016 shows Tonga's flag bearer Pita Taufatofua leading his delegation during the opening ceremony of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games at the Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro. (AFP)



In this Jan 13, 2018 file photo, Tessa Virtue (front), and Scott Moir perform their free dance routine in the ice dancing competition at the Canadian Figure Skating Championships in Vancouver, British Columbia. (AP)

Kaetlyn Osmond and Gabrielle Daleman are nearly as formidable. They finished second and third behind Medvedeva at

last year's worlds in Finland.

And rising star Larkyn Austman will have her first Olympic experience.

"In 2014, Canada didn't have any medal contenders at the Olympics," Osmond said, "and you almost forgot that Gabby and I finished second and third (at worlds) last year. It's exciting that we're able to send three women to the Olympics, especially because we haven't done it in many years."

Olympic silver medalist Patrick Chan, a three-time world champion and two-time Grand Prix final champ, will be joined by Keegan Messing in a wide-open men's event.

"I feel really good about my confidence for the whole team," Chan said. "After seeing how my teammates have done during the Grand Prix season, talking to Eric and Scott, it's been great. We have really great team energy."

Figure skating historically has been an individual sport, even with the inclusion of a team event at the 2014 Sochi Olympics — where the Canadians finished second to Russia. But there is a strong sense of camaraderie within Team Canada, a close-knit feeling where everyone roots for everyone else.

Even if they happen to be skating against them.

Perhaps their nation's somewhat puzzling Olympic pedigree plays into it. Canada has won 25 medals in figure skating, one behind Russia for second most (the US has 49). But only four of those have been gold, including the pairs medal that Jamie Sale and David Pelletier were forced to share with the Russian team after a scoring controversy at the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics.

Virtue and Moir have two of Canada's three ice dance medals, Barbara Ann Scott won its only ladies gold at the 1948 St Moritz Games and the men have won five silver and four bronze but no gold.

Chan was the latest, finishing behind Japan's Yuzuru Hanyu in Sochi.

This could be Canada's big chance, though. Its sizeable stable, deep experience and the fact that it has contenders in every event could make "O Canada!" the soundtrack of the Olympics.

It could also make its flag quite popular — especially after Virtue and Moir carry it for the opening ceremony.

Hirscher suffers surprise defeat, Zenhaeusern wins in Stockholm

Norway's Haver-Loeseth beats Holdener in final

STOCKHOLM, Jan 31, (AFP): Marcel Hirscher was made to wait for the slalom World Cup crystal globe on Tuesday, as Switzerland's Ramon Zenhaeusern claimed a shock victory in the parallel slalom event at Stockholm.

Austrian Hirscher knew that a win could secure the slalom title, but the six-time defending overall champion was dumped out in the

SKIING

quarter-finals by Italian Luca Aerni.

Zenhaeusern beat home favourite Andre Myhrer in the final to ensure that his maiden World Cup podium finish would also be his first victory on the circuit.

The competition at the artificial Hammarbybacken track was the final men's event before the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, where Hirscher will be bidding to win a first Olympic gold medal.

The 28-year-old had become the second most successful men's skier of all-time on Sunday, when he claimed his fifth World Cup win at a giant slalom in Garmisch-Partenkirchen.

German Linus Strasser, last year's winner in the Swedish capital, completed the podium by seeing off Aerni in the race for third.

Runaway World Cup leader Mikaela Shiffrin skipped the women's races, which culminated in Norway's Nina Haver-Loeseth beating Wendy Holdener in the final.

Despite her absence, Shiffrin could have wrapped up the slalom discipline if Slovakia's Petra Vlhova failed to reach the quarter-finals, but Vlhova outpaced Frida Hansdotter to finish third.

Shiffrin still leads Vlhova by 175 points in the slalom standings with only two races remaining, and the American is 671 points clear of Swiss Holdener overall. The women are back in action before the Olympics, with two downhill races in Garmisch-Partenkirchen this weekend.

Results

1. Henrik Kristoffersen (NOR) 1:48.49 (55.87 + 52.62); 2. Marcel Hirscher



Ramon Zenhaeusern of Switzerland competes during the FIS Ski World Cup parallel slalom city event in Stockholm, Sweden on Jan 30, 2018. (AP)

National pride

Ice hockey sisters 'face off' for rival nations at Olympics

SEOUL, Jan 31, (AFP): They were born thousands of kilometres apart but grew up together, skated together, and went to school together. When they take to the ice at the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, though, the Brandt sisters will once again represent different countries.

Marissa was given up for adoption soon after her birth in South Korea, one of hundreds of thousands of children who found new families overseas as the country — once known as the world's top baby exporter — underwent rapid industrialisation.

Aged just four months, Greg and Robin Brandt took her home to the frozen lakes of Minnesota.

Months later Robin gave birth to her sister Hannah.

Typically for their state, the girls grew up skating regularly, and now both have won national ice hockey team



This handout photo posted in October 2017 on Instagram and released to AFP on Jan 31, 2018 courtesy of the Brandt family shows ice hockey players Marissa Brandt (left), who will play for South Korea in the coming Winter Olympic Games in Pyeongchang, and her sister Hannah Brandt (right), who will play for the USA team, posing at Florida Hospital Center Ice in Wesley Chapel, Florida. (AFP)

places.

But while forward Hannah will play for the US at next month's Games, Seoul restored Marissa's South Korean citizenship as it sought recruits to bolster its side, and she will represent the country of her birth.

It is a family story that blends issues of identity, ethnicity and adoption against a backdrop of sporting rivalry.

As a young Asian girl growing up in an American family, Marissa sought to ignore the colour of her skin, and sought to emulate blonde, pale Hannah.

"I just wanted to fit in and not look different from my sister," Marissa told AFP.

Sport was one of the ways she did so, switching from figure skating to ice hockey to follow in Hannah's blade tracks.

"We were always best friends and did everything together," said Hannah, 24.

They played on the same teams — Marissa is a defender — until they went to different colleges.

And their trajectories moved even further apart when the Korea Ice Hockey Association started scouring through colleges across North America, looking for ethnic Korean players as it scrambled to create a team good enough to avoid humiliation when it hosts the Olympics.

South Korea has only 319 registered female hockey players of its own, according to an International Ice Hockey Federation survey last year.

Marissa was identified as a likely prospect, and invited to try out for the side in 2015.

It was the first time she had returned to her birth country since her adoption, after years of distancing herself from its culture and language.

"I was excited and curious but also nervous and didn't know what to expect," she said.

Sailing into the squad, she received a South Korean passport the following year, and her jersey is emblazoned "Park Yoon-Jung", the name on her US adoption papers.

Self-proclaimed beach lover struggled in snow

Tongan pin-up makes 'crazy' Oly return

WELLINGTON, Jan 31, (AFP): Pita Taufatofua captured global attention as Tonga's oiled and topless flag bearer at the Rio Olympics, but he says things didn't get really weird until he decided to qualify for the Winter Games in Pyeongchang.

The 34-year-old found himself strapping planks of wood to his feet to recreate the rigours of cross-country skiing in sweltering Australian heat.

He embarked on mad dashes through blizzards and across icy roads to reach qualification races on the ski-fields of Europe.

Pre-dawn training sessions became the norm for Taufatofua — a self-proclaimed beach lover — struggled in the snow, a substance he had seen only once before.

"It was all just so new to me. I had no idea there was wet snow, dry snow, cold snow, hot snow," he told AFP.

"And you need specialised skis for

the grandest entrance by any flag bearer in recent history".

Appearances on US talk shows followed but Taufatofua said he was already looking for his next challenge.

There was much skepticism when he announced his Winter Games bid.

A Norwegian Olympic champion said: "I think he looks better covered in oil than with skis on his feet".

But Taufatofua said athletes from what he terms "summer countries", including Mexico, Portugal and Colombia, rallied to support their fellow outsider.

"We would pool resources," he said. "We'd share skis and tips on technique. We'd sleep in a hostel with three beds together and just eat pasta and tuna because that was all we could afford."

"We drove through blizzards for eight hours in Iceland trying to avoid avalanches and raced across Armenia and Georgia.

Within hours, he racked up 45 million mentions on Twitter and the normally staid Wall Street Journal hailed "perhaps

Argentina coach wants Messi fresh for WC

Locust swarms pose threat to World Cup pitches

MOSCOW, Jan 31. (Agencies): Swarms of locusts pose a threat to Russia's soccer World Cup as they could attack stadium pitches and cause a "global scandal", an Agriculture Ministry official said on Wednesday.

President Vladimir Putin is hoping to use the the World Cup from June 14 to July 15 to showcase his country as a superpower at a time of frayed relations with the West over Syria and Ukraine.

Matches will be played in 12 stadiums in 11 cities. Pyotr Chekmarev, head of the agriculture ministry's crop farming department, said the pitches could be targeted by locusts during the summer months.

"One way or another, we have learnt how to deal with locusts, but how do we not fall into a global scandal with locusts this year?" he said at an agricultural event in Moscow.

"The whole world is coming here. Football fields are green. Locusts love it where there is lots of green. How would they not come to the place where football is being played?"

Chekmarev said around a million hectares of land in southern Russia was infested with locusts, including around the World Cup host city of Volgograd.

Argentina coach Jorge Sampaoli said Tuesday he expects captain and star striker Lionel Messi to arrive at the World Cup in peak form after he battled fatigue at the 2014 tournament.

"We've spoken with Leo about what's happening and that he doesn't find himself in the same situation four years ago when he arrived exhausted at the World Cup (in Brazil)," Sampaoli said at a news conference.

SOCCER

The former Chile and Sevilla coach added the goal was to ensure that Messi "makes the most of his rest periods to arrive (in Russia) at the top of his physical and mental form".

Messi scored four goals as Argentina reached the final in Brazil, but he cut a peripheral figure in the latter stages as his side finished runners-up to Germany following a 1-0 defeat after extra time.

Argentina last won the World Cup in 1986 with Diego Maradona inspiring the country to a second title. In Russia, they will face Iceland, Croatia and Nigeria in Group D.

Former Italy coach Azeglio Vicini, in charge of the team at the 1990 World Cup, has died at the age of 84, the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) said on Wednesday.

Vicini coached Italy from 1986 to 1991 and led them to the semifinals at the 1988 European championship and the World Cup which they hosted two years later.

Italy's bid to win the title on home soil ended when they were beaten on penalties by a Diego Maradona-inspired Argentina following a 1-1 draw in a dramatic semifinal. They went on to beat England 2-1 in the third-place match.

"It was a national team which played with heart, passion and entertained the Italians," said the FIGC.

He stepped down in 1991 after Italy surprisingly failed to qualify for Euro 1992 after finishing below the Soviet Union in their group.

Vicini coached Italian national teams at youth level for eleven years before taking charge of the senior side and only coached three club sides — Brescia, Cesena and Udinese.

His playing career took him to Vicenza, Sampdoria and, finally, Brescia.

The FIGC said that a minute's silence would be held before Coppa Italia match between AC Milan and Lazio and the weekend's Serie A games.



Humiliated former Italy coach Gian Piero Ventura, sacked after the four-time World Cup winners failed to reach the 2018 tournament in Russia, has revealed he wants to return coaching.

"I've just returned from something that was bigger than me and I paid violently," Ventura, whose qualifying fiasco saw Italy miss a first World Cup since 1958, was quoted as saying in La Repubblica newspaper.

"My father taught me never to give up and three months can not cancel thirty-five years," he continued. "I have a fierce desire to start again for a simple reason, I need to give answers now and I want to give them."

Ventura took over the national team when Antonio Conte left to coach Chelsea in 2016.

The 70-year-old had never managed a major club, having previously coached Udinese, Cagliari, Napoli, Messina, Verona, Pisa, Bari and Torino.



Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi (right), vies with Alaves' Spanish midfielder Alvaro Medran during the Spanish League football match between FC Barcelona and Deportivo Alaves at the Camp Nou Stadium in Barcelona on Jan 28, 2018. (AFP)

Best of the Rest

Kvitova wins, Garcia out: Petra Kvitova advanced to the second round of the St. Petersburg Ladies Trophy on Wednesday, and Caroline Garcia was eliminated.

Kvitova, playing as a wild-card entry, beat Elena Vesnina 6-2, 6-0.

The two-time Wimbledon champion will next play Irina-Camelia Begu.



Garcia, ranked seventh in the world, lost to Russian qualifier Elena Rybakina 4-6, 7-6 (6), 7-6 (5).

Rybalkina will next face either Julia

Goerges or Roberta Vinci in the quarter-finals. (AP)

□ □ □

Thibaut Pinot to ride Giro:

French star Thibaut Pinot confirmed on Wednesday that he will take part in this year's Giro d'Italia as well as going for glory in the Tour de France.

The 27-year-old climber announced his choice as his Groupama-FDJ team unveiled their line-up for the race in Paris.

Last year Pinot came fourth on

his Giro debut, 1min 17sec behind race winner Tom Dumoulin of the Netherlands.

He then failed to finish the Tour de France, in which he came third in 2014.

"Thibaut will go to the Giro d'Italia to do well and then he will go on to the Tour de France in good shape," said Marc Madiot, his team manager.

"We think his participation in the Giro will set him nicely for the Tour."

This year's Giro starts in Jerusalem on May 4 and is set to finish on May 27 in Rome, just 41 days before the Tour de France gets under way. (AFP)

□ □ □

Tamanivalu signs for Bordeaux:

All Black wing Seta Tamanivalu has agreed to join Bordeaux-Begles on a three-year deal from next season, the French Top 14 side's president said on Wednesday.

The 25-year-old, who was born in Fiji and has won three caps for New Zealand, has spent the last two seasons playing for the Crusaders, winners of the Super Rugby title last year. (AFP)

□ □ □

Formula 1 abolishes 'grid girls':

Formula One has ended the practice

of using scantily clad "grid girls" before races, the sport's organisers Liberty Media said on Wednesday.

They said the practice of having the women milling about in the grid area before races was "clearly at odds with modern day societal norms".

Darts took a similar decision this month, banning the women who walk on with the players before matches.

"Over the last year we have looked at a number of areas which we felt needed updating so as to be more in tune with our vision for this great sport," said Sean Bratches, Managing Director, Commercial Operations at Formula 1.

"While the practice of employing grid girls has been a staple of Formula 1 Grands Prix for decades, we feel this custom does not resonate with our brand values and clearly is at odds with modern day societal norms."

Bratches said the practice was not "appropriate or relevant to Formula 1 and its fans, old and new, across the world."

The new Formula One season begins on March 25 with the Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne. (AFP)

□ □ □

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His playing career took him to Vicenza, Sampdoria and, finally, Brescia.

Soccer Roundup

Ozil becomes highest paid Arsenal player

Al Ain secure spot in ACL group phase

HONG KONG, Jan 31. (Agencies): Former champions Al Ain of the United Arab Emirates have secured their place in the group stages of the Asian Champions League with a 2-0 win over Bahrain's Malkiya.

Al Ain had goals from Marcus Berg and Caio Junior to thank for their progress on Tuesday and they now take their place in Group D alongside Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal, Esteghlal of Iran and Al Rayyan from Qatar.

Wesley Sneijder scored for Al Ghafra as the Qatari club saw off Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor, while Nasaf Qarshi, also from Uzbekistan, defeated Jordan's Al Faisaly.

A pair of late goals from Morteza Tabrizi ensured Iran's Zob Ahan saw off Alizawa from India.

Tianjin won their first game under new coach Paulo Sousa, with Anthony Modeste scoring twice as the Chinese Super League side saw off Ceres-Negros from the Philippines.

"It is great inspiration for Chinese football because there will be a new Chinese team playing in the Asian Champions League," said Sousa, who took over from Fabio Cannavaro at the end of last season.

"We have the faith to continue our journey successfully, to overcome every opponent and go further."

Shanghai SIPG were made to work hard for their 1-0 win over Chiangrai United from Thailand.

Suwon cruised past Vietnam's Thanh Hoa with a 5-1 win and Kashima Reysol defeated Muangthong United from Thailand to advance to the group phase.

□ □ □

German World Cup winner Mesut Ozil gave Arsenal a big boost on Wednesday by finally agreeing a new contract which will see him become the highest paid player in the club's history, according to the BBC.

The broadcaster reports that the 29-year-old playmaker — who has been with the Gunners since joining from Real Madrid for a then-record club fee of £42.4million (\$60million, 48.2million euros) in 2013 — signed a three-and-a-half year contract and will earn around £350,000 a week.

Speculation over both Ozil and Chilean Alexis Sanchez's futures have plagued the club for almost a year, as both their contracts were up

at the end of the present campaign. However, whilst Sanchez left for Manchester United, where he has become the highest paid player in the Premier League at a pre-tax weekly wage of £500,000, Ozil has committed himself to Arsenal until 2021.

According to the BBC both parties reached an agreement last weekend, and Ozil signed the new contract at Arsenal's training ground on Wednesday.

□ □ □

RB Leipzig's attempt to sign 16-year-old Portuguese talent Umaro Embalo from Benfica collapsed at the last minute because the Germans balked at paying his agent, according to media reports on Wednesday.

The teenage winger arrived in Leipzig last Sunday to undergo a medical and sign a deal, while Benfica's president had already flown to Germany for talks with the Bundesliga club.

The deal fell through when Leipzig's CEO Oliver Mintzlaff reportedly refused to pay a fee to Embalo's agent.

□ □ □

Former Liverpool defender Gabriel Paletta was reported to be eyeing a move to either China or Turkey after his contract with AC Milan was terminated by mutual consent.

The decision to rescind the con-



In this file photo taken on Dec 22, 2017, Arsenal's German midfielder Mesut Ozil celebrates scoring the team's second goal during the English Premier League football match against Liverpool at the Emirates Stadium in London. (AFP)

tract with Paletta was agreed by mutual consent," Milan club director Massimiliano Mirabelli said on Twitter.

"All the best Gabriel, for everything that will come in your career."

Fenerbahce are the favourites to sign the centre-back, who turns 32 in two weeks, and who joined Milan from Parma in 2015 on a three-year deal which was due to expire in June.

But Turkish clubs Galatasaray and Antalyaspor are also interested in the player who is also considering a move to China.

Jose Mourinho has revealed Juan Mata's contract at Manchester United has been extended for another year.

Spain midfielder Mata was in the last six months of the deal he signed when he joined the club from Chelsea in 2014, but United had the option of keeping him for an extra season and have triggered that agreement.

The 29-year-old is now committed to United until 2019.

Asked if the contract had been extended, United manager Mourinho said: "Yes it was. Last week or something like that."

There was speculation about Mata's future when Mourinho took charge at United in 2016.

Mourinho was manager at Chelsea when Mata was allowed to leave Stamford Bridge four years ago.

Speculation returned last week when United completed the signing of Alexis Sanchez from Arsenal, with questions arising over where Mata would now fit into the team.

Antalyaspor announced Tuesday they have released former Cameroon international striker Samuel Eto'o, who is expected to sign with fellow Turkish top-flight club Koncaspor.

"Our team separated ways with our captain Samuel Eto'o by mutual agreement," Antalyaspor, who are in the relegation zone in Turkey's first division, said in a statement on the club's website.

Eto'o, 36, joined Antalyaspor in 2015 after a short spell in Italy with Sampdoria.

He will stay in Turkey though, with Konyaspor saying Eto'o will complete a move to the club, who are one place below Antalyaspor, on Wednesday.

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Eagles found elixir for offense just in Nick of time

Typecast Patriots take stage again as Super Bowl villains

MINNEAPOLIS, Jan 31, (RTRS): Every great drama needs a hero and a villain and on Sunday the New England Patriots will assume their role as the National Football League's most hated team when they take on the Philadelphia Eagles in the Super Bowl.

For the Patriots it is type-casting. On the NFL stage they play no other role. Fans criticize them for being just too successful in a league designed to not have dynasties and can not forgive two rule-bending scandals in the last decade.

The Eagles, however, are far from angels. Their fans after all once booted Santa and pelted him with snow balls.

But such behavior can be overlooked alongside what has become known as the New England Evil Empire, a championship machine that operates with ultimate efficiency.

They have reached the Super Bowl for the eighth time since 2002, hoisting the Vince Lombardi trophy five times, including twice in the past three seasons.

The Patriots, however, have also

twisted the rules to their advantage — including videotaping opposition coaches in 2007 and deliberately under-inflating balls in a playoff game in 2015 — which have left a tarnish on their legacy.

It is a role Patriots owner Robert Kraft understands.

"When I actually bought the Patriots there were 23 lawsuits out. I know the league was thinking about buying the team and everyone was so nice to me for those first few years," Kraft told

FOOTBALL

reporters during Super Bowl Opening Night on Monday.

"Once we went to the Super Bowl in 1996 a lot of the people who were kind and gracious changed."

"Everyone loves a door mat in this league."

It is that kind of attitude that resulted in a Public Policy Poll released just before last year's Super Bowl that showed their quarterback Tom Brady and coach Bill Belichick were at the top of the most-hated list.



Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Nick Foles warms up before the NFL football NFC Championship game against the Minnesota Vikings on Jan 21, 2018 in Philadelphia. (AP)

Belichick could take some small comfort in that fans disliked NFL commissioner Roger Goodell more.

Brady, however, is a more enigma

matic figure. The poll also found him to be the NFL's most popular quarterback as well.

For fans outside of New England,

however, he is simply too smug, too rich and too good.

In the Super Bowl setting it is hard to see what anyone could dislike about Brady.

He arrived at Opening Night, smiled, answered questions, was playful and disarming.

But there is also the win at all costs Brady who was suspended four games for his part in deflating the balls.

Belichick, on the other hand, emanates a "keep your distance" vibe and appears to endure media conferences rather than enjoy them and rarely gives anything away.

Only Kraft is willing to offer a hint about the deeper philosophy.

"I think it's good (there is a team like the Patriots) but there are 31 other cities that don't agree," said Kraft. "I understand everyone wants their team to win."

"I'm just happy we are in our position."

"Every roof has a leak, every heart has some sadness, you just work through it and you do your best."

"Someone out there will work hard and take us down but I hope it's not this Sunday."

Meanwhile, a bye week during the opening wild-card round of the NFL playoffs has Nick Foles playing the most confident football of his career, and the Philadelphia Eagles on the doorstep of the franchise's first Super Bowl victory.

During that two-week window, former NFL quarterback and Eagles head coach Doug Pederson determined something had to be done to slow the game down for Foles.

He was just three-and-a-half games in as the Eagles' starter by default. On Dec 10, MVP candidate Carson Wentz suffered a torn ACL and LCL at Los Angeles, and the win over the Rams put Foles under the microscope.

"It's still the same aggressive mindset," said Eagles offensive coordinator Frank Reich. "That's the unique thread between Carson and Nick. Those guys want to throw the ball down the field and make the big play."

Pederson, mostly a backup quarterback during his NFL career, pleaded with the Eagles and their followers to trust the team would overcome the challenge of losing Wentz and keep winning games.

NFL Roundup

Colts' Luck regaining strength

Brady's throwing hand still not 100 percent OK

NEW YORK, Jan 31, (RTRS): Tom Brady was down to one glove on Tuesday, but the New England Patriots quarterback acknowledged that his right hand is "not where I want it to be" five days before Super Bowl LII.

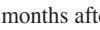
Brady required 12 stitches after suffering a cut on his throwing hand in practice leading up to the AFC Championship Game two weeks ago. He has been coy about the injury since, regularly wearing gloves on both hands, including during Media Night on Monday.



Brady

He arrived to Tuesday's press availability sporting a glove only on his throwing hand — one specifically made for Brady by Under Armour that he said "has a lot of recovery in it."

"It's getting better," Brady said of the hand. "I'm just trying to take care of it."



About three months after he was shut down for the rest of the 2017 season with recurring pain in his throwing shoulder, Indianapolis Colts quarterback Andrew Luck is "very close" to resuming a throwing routine, according to a report.

NFL Network's Ian Rapoport reported that Luck was headed to Los Angeles to train with throwing mechanics experts Tom House and Adam Dedeaux, who have worked with high-profile QBs such as Brady, Drew Brees, Matt Ryan and Eli Manning, among many others.



With rumors swirling about a possible trade in his future, Chiefs quarterback Alex Smith said that he wants to remain in Kansas City, where he has played the last five seasons.

"I love where I'm at," Smith said on the "Dan Patrick Show" when asked where he would play in 2018 if it were up to him. "I feel like we underachieved. I feel like we, offensively last year, did some awesome things. But who knows?"

Many expect the Chiefs to trade Smith this offseason and install 2017 first-round pick Patrick Mahomes as the new starter. Kansas City traded two first-round picks and a third-rounder to move up 17 spots and grab Mahomes 10th overall in April.



Washington Redskins quarterback and pending free agent Kirk Cousins will be looking for a payday this spring, but the opportunity to win will also be a major factor in his decision-making process.

"Is money a part of it? Sure. Is it the only thing? No," Cousins said Tuesday on "PFT Live." "It is about winning, and that's what I want more than anything, so I'm going to be willing to make sacrifices or do what has to be done to make sure I'm in the best possible position to win, and that's what the

Eagles left tackle Jason Peters will return for a 15th NFL season, whether in Philadelphia or somewhere else.

"They hadn't asked me, but I'm going to be back," Peters told the Philadelphia Inquirer on Monday when asked if he has had any conversations with Eagles brass about his future. "Step out on a limb, if they don't want me, I'm still going somewhere."

The Jaguars' center Ryan Kalil told The Charlotte Observer that he intends to retire after the 2018 season.

Kalil, 33, will join veteran teammate Thomas Davis in leaving the game after next season. Thomas reaffirmed his intention to retire to NFL.com earlier this month.

Carolina Panthers center Ryan Kalil told The Charlotte Observer that he intends to retire after the 2018 season.

The Tennessee Titans have hired Matt LaFleur as offensive coordinator, the same position LaFleur held with the Los Angeles Rams this season.

With the Titans, LaFleur will have the opportunity to call plays, something he wasn't able to do under Rams head coach Sean McVay in his first season as an NFL offensive coordinator. LaFleur, 38, interviewed for the Rams' head-coaching vacancy earlier this offseason before the team tabbed Mike Vrabel for the job.

Despite renewed pressure from the Change the Mascot group toward the Washington Redskins, NFL commissioner Roger Goodell doesn't anticipate the team's name changing.

Goodell noted on ESPN radio that Washington owner Dan Snyder has been steadfast in his desire to keep the nickname, adding, "I don't see him changing that perspective."

between Jagr and the Kladno Knights in the second-tier Czech league has been signed but no details have been immediately available. Jagr planned a news conference in Kladno for Thursday.

Kladno, just west of the capital Prague, is Jagr's hometown.

The 45-year-old Jagr had only a goal and six assists in 22 games for

BOSTON, Jan 31, (AP): Adam Henrique scored twice and the Anaheim Ducks ended Boston's 18-game point streak with a 3-1 victory over the Bruins on Tuesday night.

Jakob Silfverberg also scored for the Ducks, the first team to beat the Bruins in regulation since Washington's 5-3 win Dec 14 at Boston. Cam Fowler and Rickard Rakell had two assists apiece.

John Gibson made 25 saves before leaving in the third period with an undisclosed injury. Ryan Miller played the final 7:25 and nearly completed a shutdown for the Ducks before Ryan Spooner scored for Boston with 41 seconds left.

Henrique scored into an empty net with 6.1 seconds remaining to seal it for the Ducks, who halted Boston's five-game winning streak and a stretch of 18 games with at least one point (14-0-4), which tied for the second-longest in franchise history.

The Ducks have won eight straight

ICE HOCKEY

against the Bruins, who haven't beaten Anaheim since a 3-2 shootout win on Oct 21, 2013.

Penguins 5, Sharks 2

In Pittsburgh, Evgeni Malkin got his 12th career hat-trick and Bryan Rust scored two goals as surging Pittsburgh rallied past San Jose.

Malkin's 24th goal of the season led in the second period tied it. His 25th early in the third gave Pittsburgh the lead for good and his 26th rolled into an empty net with just more than a minute remaining as the Penguins won for the eighth time in 10 games.

Jets 3, Lightning 1

In Winnipeg, Manitoba, Michael Hutchinson made 23 saves in his first NHL start of the season to help Winnipeg beat league-leading Tampa Bay.

Patrik Laine scored his team-leading 23rd goal for the Jets (30-13-8). Kyle Connor and Bryan Little also scored, and Blake Wheeler had two assists.

Golden Knights 4, Flames 2

In Calgary, Alberta, Jonathan Marchessault got the go-ahead goal and added an assist as Vegas scored three times in the final two minutes to stun Calgary.

Just 10 seconds after Erik Haula tied it 2-all at 18:14 of the third period, Marchessault got around Mark Giordano and beat Flames goalie Mike Smith with his glove.

Wild 3, Blue Jackets 2, SO

In Columbus, Ohio, Zach Parise and Chris Stewart scored in the shootout as Minnesota topped Columbus.

Devan Dubnyk had 28 saves for the Wild (27-18-5), who earned their 10th road win of the season. Jason Zucker scored his 20th goal, and Charlie Coyle added his fifth in the third period.

The Blue Jackets (27-19-4) lost for the fourth time in six games. Sergei Bobrovsky made 41 stops, Artemi Panarin had a goal and an assist and

Calgary after signing a one-year, \$1 million contract on Oct 4 as an unrestricted free agent. He hasn't played since Dec 31 because of what the team called a lower-body injury.

Jagr might play for the Knights as soon as Saturday but Kladno spokesman Vit Heral has not yet confirmed that.

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Malkin's hat-trick powers Penguins past Sharks



Anaheim Ducks' Adam Henrique (14) is sent to the ice by Boston Bruins' David Pastrnak during the third period of Anaheim's 3-1 win in an NHL hockey game in Boston on Jan 30. (AP)

NHL Results/Standings

WASHINGTON, Jan 31, (RTRS): Results and standings from the NHL games on Tuesday:

3	Boston	1	St. Louis	3	Montreal	1
3	Buffalo	1	Chicago	2	Nashville	1
4	NY Islanders	1	Winnipeg	3	Tampa Bay	1
5	San Jose	2	Los Angeles	3	Dallas	0
2	Ottawa	1	Las Vegas	4	Calgary	2
3	Columbus (SO)	2	Vancouver	4	Colorado (OT)	3

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS
29	13	3	176	128	71	30	13	8	167	137	68
29	11	8	157	119	66	29	12	7	146	125	65
28	18	5	162	146	61	31	18	3	151	131	65
20	22	6	136	159	46	28	19	4	155	137	60
19	21	8	126	146	46	27	18	5	147	142	59
20	24	6	130	159	46	27	18	4	160	143	58
15	24	9	125	168	39	27	18	7	148	13	

PRIME TIME

thursday— (all times are kuwait local)

07:00 wta st petersburg/tennis bein sports 9 hd
08:00 portugal vs romania/futsal bein sports 8 hd
10:30 morocco vs libya/soccer bein sports 1 hd
11:30 vietnam vs malaysia/futsal bein sports 7 hd
13:00 jaguars vs patriots/football bein sports 7 hd
13:35 perth vs hobart/cricket bein sports 13 hd
18:30 sudan vs nigeria/soccer bein sports 1 h
23:30 barca vs valencia/soccer bein sports 3 hd

Sports

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Harden makes history, Rockets see off Magic



Houston Rockets guard James Harden drives to the basket as Orlando Magic guard Elfrid Payton (left), defends during the first half of an NBA basketball game on Jan 30, 2018 in Houston. (AP)

Love breaks hand in Cavs defeat

HOUSTON, Jan 31, (AP): James Harden became the first player in NBA history to score 60 points as part of a triple-double and the short-handed Houston Rockets beat the Orlando Magic 114-107 on Tuesday night.

Harden scored 18 points in the fourth quarter to eclipse the 57 points Calvin Murphy scored in 1978 to break Houston's single-game scoring record. After Harden broke the record, cameras in the arena showed a shot of Murphy, who works on the television broadcast team, smiling and clapping for the Beard, who also had 10 rebounds and 11 assists.

The game was tied at 107 after a basket by Marreese Speights with just under four minutes to play. Neither team scored for more than two minutes after that before Harden took over, scoring the next six points to make it 113-107 with 45 seconds left.

He set the scoring mark when he stepped back and made a 3-pointer before crashing to the court after being fouled by Mario Hezonja. He then made the free throw to give him 60 points and bringing the crowd to its feet.

Hezonja and Speights scored 17 points each for the Magic, who dropped their third straight.

Pistons 125, Cavaliers 114

In Detroit, Andre Drummond had 21 points and 22 rebounds, and the short-handed Detroit Pistons beat Cleveland

BASKETBALL

status would be updated after additional examination Wednesday in Cleveland.

Wizards 102, Thunder 96

In Washington, beginning what could be a significant stretch without All-Star point guard John Wall, the Washington Wizards got 25 points from Otto Porter Jr., limited Russell Westbrook to 13 and stopped Oklahoma City's eight-game win streak.

Bradley Beal had 21 points and nine assists for Washington, which announced about 7-1/2 hours before tipoff that Wall will have arthroscopic surgery on his left knee Wednesday.

Paul George had 28 points for Oklahoma City, but zero in the fourth quar-

ter. Carmelo Anthony scored 19, but he missed three shots in the final 30 seconds. Westbrook wound up with 10 assists, six rebounds and seven turnovers and made only 5 of 18 shots.

Wall, picked for his fifth All-Star game last week, is second on the Wizards in scoring, averaging 19.4 points, and is second in the league with 9.3 assists per game. In July, he agreed to a \$170 million, four-year contract extension that starts next season.

Jazz 129, Warriors 99

In Salt Lake, Ricky Rubio scored 23 points and handed out 11 assists as the Jazz stunned the Warriors.

The loss ended a three-game winning streak for the Warriors, who had won seven of eight before facing the Jazz. It was their largest loss of the season.

Warriors coach Steve Kerr seemed to waive the white flag with more than six minutes left in the game, pulling his starters.

Klay Thompson led Golden State with 27 points and six rebounds while Kevin Durant finished with 17.

Nicks 111, Nets 95

In New York, Kristaps Porzingis scored 28 points, Enes Kanter had 20 points, 20 rebounds and five assists, and the Knicks completed a New York City sweep of the Nets with a victory.

The Knicks returned home from their longest road trip of the season in new uniforms but their same old dominance of the Nets, with their fourth victory in four tries this season. They dominated the interior again and swept the series for the first time since 2010-11 — before the rivals shared the same city.

DeMarre Carroll scored 13 points for the Nets, who lost their fourth straight game.

Raptors 109, Timberwolves 104

In Toronto, DeMar DeRozan scored 23 points, Jonas Valanciunas had 18 points and 11 rebounds and the Raptors rallied from a 13-point deficit to beat the Timberwolves.

Kyle Lowry and Serge Ibaka each scored 15 points and Jakob Poeltl had six of his 12 points in the fourth quarter as the Raptors won their 14th straight home meeting with the Timberwolves.

Minnesota has not won in Toronto since Jan. 21, 2004, when current Timberwolves star Andrew Wiggins was eight years old.

Toronto is 19-4 at home this season, the second-best record in the NBA behind San Antonio (21-4).

Jimmy Butler scored 25 points, Wiggins had 15 and Jeff Teague and Goran Dragic each finished with 14 but the Timberwolves lost for the fourth time in five games.



Los Angeles Clippers forward Montrezl Harrell (left), attempts to dunk as Portland Trail Blazers forward Ed Davis defends during the second half of an NBA basketball game on Jan 30, 2018 in Los Angeles. The Trail Blazers won 104-96. (AP)

ARAB TIMES

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Chelsea complete Giroud signing

Aubameyang joins Arsenal for record fee

LONDON, Jan 31, (AFP): Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang joined Arsenal from Borussia Dortmund for a club-record fee of around £56 million on Wednesday, with Olivier Giroud moving to Chelsea as part of a complicated transfer jigsaw.

But as the clock ticked down to the closure of the transfer window in England at 2300 GMT, Manchester City were reported to have pulled out of a move to sign Leicester's Riyad Mahrez.

Aubameyang, 28, signed a contract with the Gunners until 2021, becoming Arsenal's second big-name signing of the January transfer window after Henrikh Mkhitaryan joined from Manchester United.

The signing, which translates as \$79 million, or 64 million euros, will boost Arsene Wenger's forward options after the departure of Alexis Sanchez to United in a swap deal with Mkhitaryan but raises questions about Alexandre Lacazette's future in the starting line-up.

"Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang has joined us from Borussia Dortmund on a long-term contract for a club-record fee," Arsenal said in a statement on their website, describing him as one of the world's most highly rated strikers.

Aubameyang compared himself to club legend Thierry Henry, telling Arsenal Player he was attracted by the club's "big history".

The Gabon international will be reunited at the Emirates Stadium with former Dortmund team-mate Mkhitaryan -- a tweet on Arsenal's Twitter account pictured the two

players together with the message "Friends reunited".

Aubameyang posted a message on Instagram apologising for the circumstances surrounding his departure from Germany but describing himself as "crazy".

"Perhaps it was not the best way for me to have decided, but everyone knows that Auba is crazy," Aubameyang said.

"And yes, I am crazy lad, hahaha. I have made mistakes, but I never had any bad intentions. I will never forget it these four and a half years at Borussia Dortmund."



Aubameyang

Chelsea later announced the arrival of Arsenal striker Giroud on an 18-month contract for around £18 million and Michy Batshuayi's departure for Borussia Dortmund in a loan deal until the end of the season.

Giroud, 31, who has struggled to hold down a regular starting spot since joining Arsenal in 2012, said he was delighted to be joining their London rivals.

Batshuayi, 24, arrives in Dortmund as a direct replacement for Aubameyang, to complete the three-way puzzle.

Pep Guardiola's City were reported to have pulled out of a bid for Mahrez, who won the Premier League with Leicester in 2015-16, after making a final cash-plus-player offer worth up to £65 million, according to Sky

SOCER

fee of £57 million for young French centre-back Aymeric Laporte from Athletic Bilbao, whose deal was confirmed on Tuesday.

Tottenham are expected to confirm the signing of Lucas Moura from Paris Saint-Germain for a reported £25 million.

The Brazilian winger, who has struggled for playing time after the arrival at PSG of Neymar and Kylian Mbappe, arrived at Spurs' training base on Tuesday morning ahead of a medical.

Swansea, whose win against Arsenal on Tuesday saw them move out of the Premier League's bottom three, reportedly want to bring Ghanaian forward Andre Ayew back to Wales from West Ham.

The Swans are hoping to sign the 28-year-old for around £18-20 million, according to the Evening Standard.